MAD CAVE

SYNAP™

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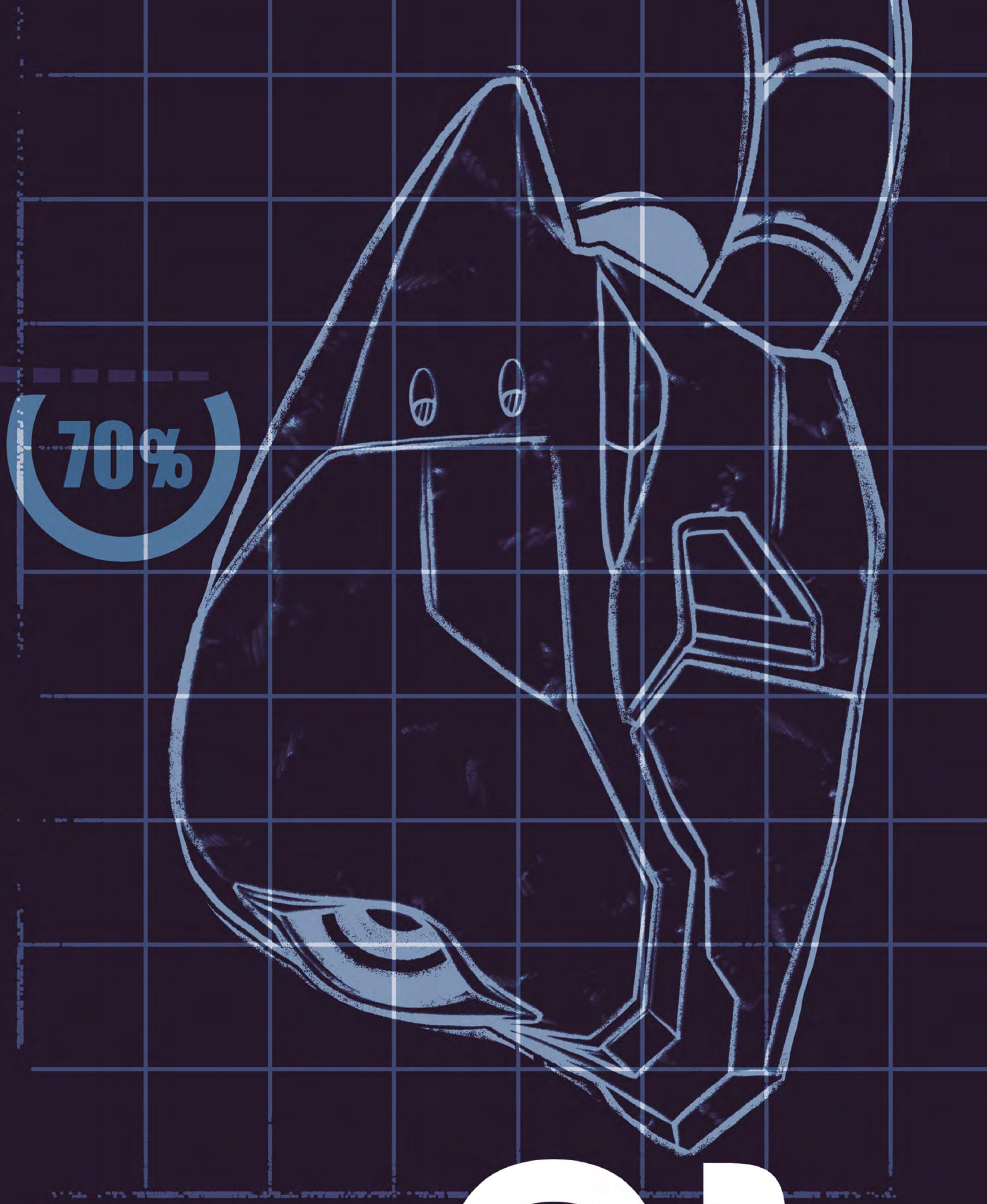


CHAPTER 01
Drivers

LINKING TO SYNC TANK.
DEAFENING COMMUNICATIONS.
REDUCING LIGHT EXPOSURE TO ZERO.

SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY, 2030, PRESENT.
DRIVER EIGHT HAS REACHED FULL SENSORY DEPRIVATION.
LOOKS LIKE TODAY IS A SUCCESS.
A COUPLE MORE SESSIONS LIKE THESE AND THEY'LL ENTER THE AXON CONNECTION EASILY. AND SOON WITH NO SYNC TANK AT ALL.
TURN IT ON.
ON THEIR FIRST DAY? SHOULDN'T WE EASE THEM INTO THIS?
NOW.
RIGHT AWAY, SIR.
DANGER

DEEP BREATHS, I CAN DO THIS.
SHILOH--
HUH?
WH-WHO ARE YOU?

DANGER
TURN IT OFF!
WHAT'S EIGHT'S STATUS?
THEY LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, SIR.
ARE YOU HURT?
I... I'M OKAY, DAD--
THEN WE CONTINUE.
RUN THE TEST AGAIN!

BEGIN, DRIVER SIX.
20 YEARS AGO
AHHHHHHHHH!
PRESENT
CHOPPER IS HERE, ANGELINE.
WE'RE WAITING ON YOU!
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

PACIFIC OCEAN
DESCRIBE THE ENCOUNTER.
PROBABLY THE SAME YOU'VE HEARD EVERYWHERE ELSE.
NO WINGS, NO ROTORS. NO SIGN OF PROPULSION AS WE KNOW IT. JUST SITTING ABOVE THE WATER AND THEN--
VOOSH, GONE. VANISHED. JETS GO PRETTY FAST, BUT THAT...WAS LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE.
WHO'D YOU SAY YOU WORKED FOR?
SYNAP TECHNOLOGIES. WE'VE BEEN CONTRACTED BY THE UNITED STATES FOR A LONG TIME.
WELL, BACK AT HOME, DO WE KNOW WHAT THIS IS YET? BETWEEN ONE GOVERNMENT LACKEY TO ANOTHER...
THE PHENOMENON IS UNIDENTIFIED, COMMANDER. UNTIL IT'S PROPERLY STUDIED--
--EVERYTHING IS ON THE TABLE.
AS LONG AS IT ISN'T THE RUSSIANS. OR THE CHINESE.
SO, WHAT NEXT?
I TAKE A DIP IN THE PACIFIC.

DROPPING NOW.
CLAK
SPLASH

YOU'RE ALMOST DIRECTLY UNDERNEATH THE COORDINATES OF THE ENCOUNTER.
SEE ANYTHING YET?

NOTHING ALIVE.
I CAN SEE IT THROUGH YOUR CAMERA. LOOKS LIKE A BLUE WHALE. MUST'VE DIED RECENTLY, IT'S BARELY DECOMPOSING.
I'LL GET A SAMPLE.
CRRKK
SHIIIIT!

BLAM
DAMMIT...
WHAT BZBZBZBZ HAPPENED? ARE YOU BZBZBZ OKAY?
CLIK
SEAFLOOR GAVE OUT, I'M PRETTY FAR DOWN HERE.
WONDER BZBZBZ THE LAST TIME BZBZ ANYTHING WAS BZBZBZB THAT DEEP.
SEE ANY BZBZBZ DINOSAURS?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

HUH...
WHERE AM I?
HELLO?
IT... HURTS.
KLAP
HEY!

IF THE COMMIES SURPASS US, YOU CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT THEY'D DO TO EVERY LAST PERSON BORN ON U.S. SOIL. THIS IS FOR YOUR COUNTRY, DRIVER ONE. FOR DEMOCRACY AROUND THE GLOBE.
YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD.
I'M NOT A FRAIL LITTLE GIRL, SIMON. I'M FINE.
I CAN DO THIS.
WHAT'S GOING ON? HELLO?
SOMEONE, HELP!

DRIVER EIGHT TEMPORARILY LOST CONSCIOUSNESS BUT THEY'RE OKAY.
8
DAD...
AGAIN.
DIRECTOR RAGUEL.
WHAT IS IT, DR. SETI?
DRIVER SIX NEEDS A PICKUP CREW IN THE PACIFIC.

WHERE IS IT?
NICE TO SEE YOU TOO, DAD.
THEY'RE HOISTING THE EYE OUT OF THE OCEAN NOW.

HOW MUCH MORE OF THE ROBOT IS IN THE OCEAN, YOU THINK?
IF WE WERE LUCKY, MOST OF IT.
SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS--
WE AREN'T LUCKY.

NEVADA DESERT
GO FIND DRIVER EIGHT. I WILL REJOIN YOU IN A MOMENT.
INCOMING CALL
THESE CRAFTS ARE APPEARING MORE AND MORE OFTEN NOW.
THEN THERE IS LITTLE TIME. WE MUST RETRIEVE NINE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
I HAVE SOMEONE ON IT.

ALL YOUR VITALS ARE NORMAL.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, SHILOH?
LIKE BARELY A PERSON.
IT'S A SIDE EFFECT FROM THE LSD IN THE NEURAL STIMULANT WE GAVE YOU. THERE ARE MORE THAN TRACE AMOUNTS IN EACH AND WE DOSED YOU THREE TIMES. YOUR FATHER IS PUSHING YOU TOO HARD.
THE BASTARD.
THESE SHOULD MELLOW OUT SOME OF THE EFFECTS.
BUT IF YOU TAKE TOO MUCH THE ONLY THING THAT'LL HELP IS TIME.
I DO NOT RECOMMEND A PSYCHEDELIC-INDUCED PANIC ATTACK.
THANK YOU!

Lynne Seti
SHILOH!
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS! JUST BECAUSE I WAS A NATURAL DOESN'T MEAN YOU WILL BE, TOO.
I'M FINE, ANGE! CAN I PLEASE HAVE SOME PERSONAL SPACE? THE WALLS ARE *SWIRLING.*
THE WALLS ARE SWIRLING?
HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU DOSE THEM, LYNNE? ON THEIR FIRST DAY?
NOT EVERY TRIPPING FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD IS GOING TO BE ABLE TO DO WHAT I DID.
NOW YOU CARE? I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE SOBER.
MILDLY.
WHO ASKED YOU?
COME, THE INSTALLATION IS ALMOST COMPLETE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M SUPPOSED TO... DRIVE IT.
IF WE MANAGE TO FINISH IT WHILE YOU'RE STILL THE ACTIVE DRIVER. FROM OUR DATA, THAT WAS THE LAST PIECE IN THE OCEAN.
IF THE PAST IS ANY INDICATION--
10 YEARS AGO
MAYBE NUMBER NINE WILL GET TO DO IT.
I WON'T LIE, IT'S NICE TO SEE THE HEAD FINISHED.

CAUTION
STAND CLEAR FROM THIS AR
FINALLY.
SECTOR 1

CHAPTER 02

Connections

CHINA
04
SNAMSUNT
04
HRGGH!
HNNGH
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD

04
WON'T BE NEEDING THIS.
等级
04
二楼
03
BE READY.
下降

02
DIRECTOR--
DID YOU FIND IT, DRIVER SEVEN?
NO, SIR.
LOOKS LIKE THEY MOVED THE TARGET.
FIND IT.
SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY
I NEED TO SPEAK WITH ANGELINE.

HEART RATE IS STEADY.
138
HMMM.
HEART RATE CLIMBING!
188

FOCUS ON YOUR BREATHING, SHILOH. LET THE REST OF THE WORLD FALL AWAY.
THUD
UM... LYNNE, HOW IS THIS HELPING ME CONTROL A ROBOT?
IT'S AS MUCH ABOUT CONNECTING WITH YOURSELF AS IT IS CONNECTING WITH THE MACHINE. AND EVENTUALLY, YOU'LL HAVE TO USE IT WITHOUT BEING IN A SENSE TANK. YOU KNOW YOUR SISTER NEVER NEEDED TO USE ONE TO ENTER THE AXON CONNECTION.
YEAH, YEAH, ANGELINE WAS *JUST PERFECT*.
SO... WHY'S IT EVEN CALLED THE AXON CONNECTION?
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW THE BASICS.
I KNOW THINGS! LIKE, I KNOW ALL ABOUT DRIVER ONE!
DO YOU NOW?
C'MON, LET ME GIVE YOU A HISTORY LESSON.

ABOUT 250 MILLION YEARS AGO, AN EXTINCTION EVENT KNOWN AS THE "GREAT DYING" WIPED OUT MOST OF THE EARTH'S SPECIES.
EARTH, 250 MILLION YEARS AGO
"WHILE SCIENTISTS POSIT MULTIPLE THEORIES FOR THE RAPID DECLINE IN BIODIVERSITY, WE KNOW THE REAL REASON... *THE MACHINE.*
SUMER, 3000 BCE
"THE MACHINE HAS HAD MANY NAMES. THE OLD ONE, THE LORD, GOD'S GUN... PIECES OF IT HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED THROUGHOUT HUMAN CIVILIZATION. COLLECTED, STUDIED, AND THEN HOARDED FOR GENERATIONS."
THAT'S WHERE WE COME IN.
THE ORIGINS OF SYNAP TECHNOLOGIES STARTED BACK IN THE CIVIL WAR.
ANTIETAM CREEK, 1862
"WHILE WE OPERATED UNDER THE GUISE OF A PRIVATE DEFENSE COMPANY WITH A DIFFERENT NAME, THIS WHOLE TIME...
"...WE'VE BEEN PUTTING TOGETHER THE MACHINE.
ATLANTIC OCEAN, 1918
"AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR, OUR ALLIES OVERSEAS, FRANCE AND ENGLAND, GAVE US WHAT THEY'D MANAGED TO PUT TOGETHER."

SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY, 1939
"IT WAS CLEAR BY THEN THAT IT WAS MEANT TO BE OPERATED. HOW WAS A MYSTERY. WE COULDN'T EVEN TURN IT ON UNTIL WE DISCOVERED FISSION.
"NUCLEAR IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN TURN IT ON, THOUGH I REASON IT HAS ITS OWN INTERNAL POWER SOURCE. **SOMEWHERE.**
"BY THE COLD WAR, RUMORS HAD STARTED THAT THE SOVIETS NOT ONLY COULD TURN IT ON BUT ALSO CONTROL IT.
"DECADES HAD ALREADY BEEN PUT IN, BUT WHEN NEWS BROKE TO THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY, FUNDING AND RESEARCH KICKED INTO OVERDRIVE.
"AND SO IN 1953, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT STARTED PROJECT: AXON, WHICH BECAME ***SYNAP TECHNOLOGIES,*** AND THAT BEGAN THE DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH OF THE ***AXON CONNECTION.***
"YOUR CONNECTION IS STRONGEST BEFORE YOUR BRAIN FINISHES DEVELOPING. MOST OF YOUR CONNECTION IS GONE WHEN YOU TURN 25...IF NOT ALL. ANYTHING LEFT RAPIDLY DECLINES.
01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
"SO SYNAP STARTED THE DRIVER PROGRAM WITH THE FIRST IN A LONG LINE...DRIVER ONE.
"HER NAME WAS VIVIAN."
SHE HELPED PUSH THIS PROJECT FURTHER THAN ANYONE. UNTIL YOUR SISTER, OF COURSE.
SHE WAS DEDICATED TO THIS, HER COUNTRY. THE MACHINE BECAME HER ***EVERYTHING.*** WHEN SHE LOST HER AXON CONNECTION...
...SHE TOOK HER OWN LIFE.
NAME: VIVIAN
FILE NUMBER
1963
AXON PROJECT:
SYNAP
Driver 01

XINJIANG PROVINCE
01
<WHAT THE FUCK?!>*
01
*TRANSLATED FROM MANDARIN
HRGHH!

01
FWIP
THUNK
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
01

01
TWO SHOTS, DRIVER SEVEN?
01
SHUT UP, SO I CAN CONCENTRATE.

<TAKE US TO THE PROJECT.>
01

ENSORY DEPRIVATI
SO...WHO OR... WHAT BUILT THE MACHINE?
WE KNOW AS MUCH AS YOU DO ON THAT ONE.
WON'T *THEY* WANT IT BACK?
WHO SAYS *THEY* ARE EVEN STILL AROUND? WHOEVER MADE IT HASN'T COME HERE IN 250 MILLION YEARS. MAYBE THAT'S A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME EVEN FOR THEM.
IT SEEMS CERTAIN PERSONALITIES LEAVE AN IMPRINT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE CONNECTION.
WE NEED MORE RESEARCH, BUT FROM ALL ACCOUNTS, WHAT YOU'RE SEEING IN THERE ARE JUST MEMORIES.
YOU WANT TO BLOCK ALL THAT OUT TO CONTROL THE MACHINE.
REMEMBER, IT'S ABOUT CONNECTING WITH YOURSELF. FOCUS ON YOUR BREATHING.
BREATHING, RIGHT. I CAN DO THAT.

JUST BREATHE, SHILOH.
AH!
AFTER BREAKTHROUGHS WITH SENSORY DEPRIVATION, PSYCHEDELICS, AND VESTIGIAL BRAIN FUNCTIONS, WE HAVE FINALLY DISCOVERED A CONNECTION TO THE MACHINE, GENERALS. I PRESENT TO YOU...
...THE AXON CONNECTION!
OH...IT'S LIKE I'M IN A MOVIE.
YOU CAN BEGIN, DRIVER ONE.

THIS ISN'T REAL, THIS ISN'T REAL, THIS ISN'T REAL!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
AREN'T YOU... A MEMORY?!
HOW FAR DO WE HAVE TO GO?

WHOA... IS THAT WHERE I CAN CONTROL THE MACHINE?
AND WHAT'S THAT?
HEY! I'M TALKING TO YOU! WHY WON'T YOU ANSWER ME?
UH.
DRIVER ONE?!
NIB

YOU WITH ME, SHILOH?
WHAT... HAPPENED?
YOU'RE THE ONE BLEEDING.
YOU TELL *ME* WHAT HAPPENED.

01
01
WE GETTING CLOSE, SEVEN?
<WHERE IS IT?>
<THROUGH HERE.>
01
01
SECTOR-01
KRAK!

THE TARGET IS NEAR.
WHERE ARE YOU?
01

DIRECTOR--
DRIVER SEVEN.
01
WE FOUND THE TARGET...
1
...WE FOUND DRIVER NINE.

STAND CLEAR FROM THIS AREA

YOUR AXON HAS LONG SINCE ATROPHIED BY NOW.
I CAN STILL FEEL IT SOMETIMES. LIKE A PHANTOM LIMB.
I SPENT SO MANY YEARS LEARNING HOW TO CONTROL THE MACHINE SO THAT MAYBE I COULD DRIVE IT. IT'S JUST HARD TO ACCEPT ALL THAT HARD WORK IS... ***GONE.***
YOU HAVE A NEW PURPOSE NOW. FINISHING OUR FAMILY'S WORK. CONSTRUCTING THE MACHINE BEFORE IT FALLS INTO THE WRONG HANDS.
WHAT'S THE POINT? LOOK AT HOW MUCH MORE WE STILL NEED TO BUILD. NO WAY WE FINISH THIS IN MY LIFE. OR SHILOH'S. OH, GOD...THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY'RE ABOUT TO LOSE.
I FEEL LIKE I'VE WASTED A LOT OF TIME, DAD. TIME I'LL ***NEVER*** GET BACK. AND WHAT DO I HAVE TO SHOW FOR IT?
WHAT WE ALL WILL, ONCE WE COMPLETE THE MACHINE. WHAT OUR FAMILY HAS WORKED ON FOR SO LONG.
BUT WHAT THEN? WE GIVE IT TO THE GOVERNMENT? WHAT'S THE POINT?
WE PROTECT THE WORLD. EARTH IS FILLED WITH THREATS, ANGELINE. ONES THAT ARE KNOWN AND THOSE THAT ARE UNIDENTIFIED. BUT IF YOU NEED PURPOSE, I HAVE A NEW MISSION FOR YOU.

WE HAVE AN OBSERVER.
WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT?
DAD... YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
A3-D
THERE ARE THINGS OUTSIDE YOUR IMAGINATION AT PLAY, ANGELINE. FROM PLACES AND TIMES FAR FROM HERE, WITH INTENTIONS UNKNOWN. WE MUST FINISH THE MACHINE, AT ANY COST.
75%
BRUSH UP ON YOUR MANDARIN. YOU'RE GOING TO ***CHINA.***

CHAPTER

03

Threats

80%
VR
AA
DR
LR
LR
AR
JR
MS

SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY, 2008
COME ON...
DAMMIT!
ARE YOU OKAY, ANGELINE?
I'M GOOD...
...JUST NEEDED A SEC.
WHACK

THIS TIME FOR SURE!
AHHHHHH!
THOOM

SHE CAN CONTROL IT ALREADY... ON HER FIRST DAY...
SHE'S A NATURAL...
HEH, MUST BE IN MY DNA.
YOU WILL DRIVE THE MACHINE.
ME?

NOT ME...
...UGH, MY HEAD.
WHERE ARE WE?
OVER SIBERIA, DRIVER SIX.
ALWAYS WANTED TO VISIT RUSSIA.
E.T.A.?
0100.

WANNA A SWIG?
IT'S AGAINST PROTOCOL, SIX.
SUIT YOURSELF.
I'M GOING BACK TO SLEEP. WAKE ME WHEN WE LAND.
SIBERIA

SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY
I'M GETTING MY BUTT KICKED, LYNN! TAKE ME BACK TO THE SENSE TANKS.
NO CAN DO, SHILOH.
YOU'RE REALITY BOUND UNTIL WE DO MORE TESTS. WE'VE NEVER SEEN AN INSTANCE OF SOMETHING IN THE CONNECTION AFFECTING THE DRIVERS IN THE REAL WORLD.
BUT WE CAN'T HAVE YOU GETTING HURT MORE UNTIL THEN. SHOULD I TURN DOWN THE DIFFICULTY?
NO, DON'T!
I CAN DO THIS!
GRIP
SLAM

SHILOH?
YOU ARE LOST, SHILOH--
I ASKED IF YOU WERE OKAY.
DAMMIT, I THINK YOU'RE CONCUSSED.
I TOLD YOU, I'M FINE!
OKAY THEN, YOU'RE FINE.
BUT YOU NEED TO HAVE MORE DRIVE, SHILOH. DON'T JUST LET THIS ROBOT TOSS YOU AROUND. DID YOU EVER PLAY SPORTS OR ANYTHING COMPETITIVE?
DAD WOULDN'T LET ME. HE ALWAYS SAID I WAS TOO VALUABLE TO GET HURT.
NOT LIKE I'D HAVE A CHANCE TO...I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME BETWEEN HERE AND THE HOSPITAL MOM IS IN.
JEEZ...AND NOW HE THROWS YOU STRAIGHT INTO THE FIRE. JERK.

C'MON.
W-WHERE ARE WE GOING?
IT'S A SURPRISE!
OH! DIRECTOR.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING EIGHT?
I WAS JUST GOING TO TAKE HIM ON AN ENDURANCE RUN THROUGH THE DESERT.
Keung
VERY WELL. GO.
THIS'LL BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.
MY LIPS ARE SEALED.
SYNAP GYM

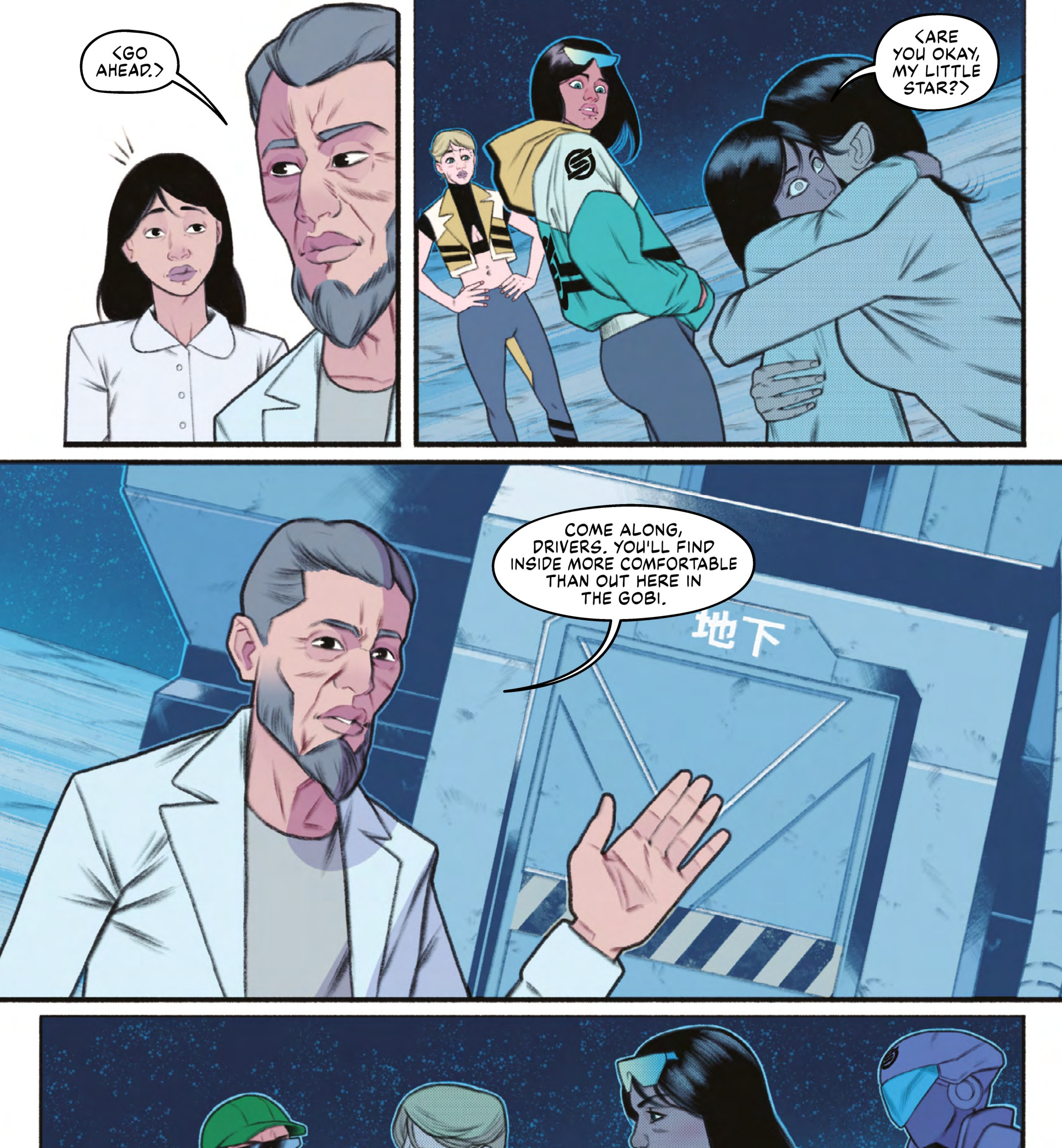
Keung
THE TARGET?
SECURED. AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR SIDE OF OUR ARRANGEMENT?
FOCUS ON YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES, ROKE. RETURNING **ALL** OF MY GRANDDAUGHTER SAFELY, AND...
...FIGURING OUT A WAY TO GET THE OLD ONE ACROSS THE PACIFIC. I PRAY YOU DO SO QUICKLY. THE C.C.P. WON'T TAKE THIS INFRACTION LIGHTLY.
RING
DIRECTOR?
STATUS UPDATE, DRIVER SEVEN.

ALMOST AT KEUNG'S FACILITY.
AND DRIVER NINE?
ABOUT THAT...
...I THINK SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH HER.
SHE'S IN THE CONNECTION. FOCUS ON GETTING HER TO THE DESTINATION SAFELY.
VROOM

GOBI DESERT
IN THE CONNECTION? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, DIRECTOR?
DIRECTOR?
CLIK
<ARE YOU HERE?>*
*<>TRANSLATED FROM MANDARIN
<OR ARE YOU IN THERE?>
LET ME IN.
<YOUR CONNECTION IS WEAK.>
<BUT IT WILL DO IF NEEDED.>

WH-WHAT WAS THAT?!
AHH!
VANESSA? MY DAD DIDN'T TELL ME YOU WERE STATIONED OVER HERE.
ANGELINE?
YOU LOOK GREAT.
YOU LOOK DRUNK. WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I'M BRINGING DRIVER NINE HOME.
LOOK, NESS...ABOUT BACK THEN, WHEN WE WERE--
WE DON'T NEED TO TALK ABOUT IT. JUST GET THE GIRL.

<HELLO, JUN. WE'VE NEVER MET BEFORE, BUT MY NAME IS ANGELINE. I'M LIKE YOU.>
<ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?>
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER? IS IT MY ACCENT?
SHE'S BEEN LIKE THIS THE WHOLE TIME. OR AT LEAST RIGHT UNTIL A MINUTE AGO WHEN I TRIED TO TALK TO HER THROUGH THE CONNECTION. AND YEA, YOUR MANDARIN IS STILL SHIT.
AND WHAT'D SHE SAY WHILE YOU WERE IN THERE?
DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO FIND OUT.
SO SHE'S IN THERE THEN. JESUS, SHE MUST BE CRYING FOR HER MOM.
AND JUN'S MOTHER WEEPS FOR HER HERE.


<GO AHEAD.>
<ARE YOU OKAY, MY LITTLE STAR?>
COME ALONG, DRIVERS. YOU'LL FIND INSIDE MORE COMFORTABLE THAN OUT HERE IN THE GOBI.
地下

YOU'VE GOT TWO WHOLE LIMBS?! A PRIVATE CITIZEN?! HOW?
WHISTLES
MONEY AMASSES MANY THINGS. PEOPLE, POWER, AND IN THIS CASE, PARTS.
I'VE LIVED A LONG TIME AND MADE FORTUNES SEVERAL TIMES OVER. I LIKE TO SEE THIS AS PART OF MY LEGACY.
HOW IN THE HELL ARE WE GONNA GET THESE OUT OF THE COUNTRY IS THE REAL QUESTION.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE KID?
THIS IS HOW SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN. EVER SINCE SHE WAS BORN. HER CONNECTION IS THE STRONGEST WE'VE EVER SEEN. DWARFING EVEN YOUR PRIME, SIX.
THAT IS, AT LEAST IN PART, WHY YOU'RE HERE. TO BRING HER BACK TO HER MOTHER AND TO THE REAL WORLD.
SO SHE'S BEEN SLEEPWALKING THROUGH LIFE?
I'LL GET HER OUT.

YOU THINK YOU CAN DO THIS?
CAN YOU?
ONE MORE.
HEY!
YOUR CONNECTION IS WEAK, VANESSA. YOU KNOW STIMMING WILL ONLY MAKE IT DETERIORATE FASTER. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE TRYING TO PROVE A POINT OR--
NOW YOU CARE ABOUT ME?
AND WHERE WERE YOU BEFORE I RETIRED, HUH? I WAS IN A DARK PLACE. A *REALLY* DARK PLACE. A PLACE YOU'VE BEEN. AND YOU ABANDONED ME AND DROWNED YOURSELF IN WHATEVER THE FUCK IS IN YOUR DIRTY FLASK!
YOU KNOW IT BROUGHT UP HARD FEELINGS.
OF COURSE, I KNOW! THAT'S THE POINT! AND YOU LEFT ME, ANYWAY...
...DON'T PRETEND LIKE YOU CARE NOW.
ONE MORE ROUND, DOC.

临床报告
连接实验室
<I'M COMING TO GET YOU, KID.>
HUH?
WHAT'S WRONG?
I CAN'T FEEL THE CONNECTION.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
NO PROBLEM!
WHY CAN'T I FEEL THE CONNECTION?

GET AWAY FROM ME!
I NEED ANOTHER STIM!
WHERE'S THE CONNECTION? IS IT GONE? WHY CAN'T I FEEL IT?
TAKE A DEEP BREATH, VANESSA. THERE'S TOO MUCH LSD IN YOUR SYSTEM, IT'S MAKING YOU HAVE A PANIC ATTACK.
WHY CAN'T I FEEL IT? WHY CAN'T I FEEL IT? WHY CAN'T I FEEL IT?
WHY CAN'T I FEEL IT?
I'M...IN THE CONNECTION. BUT HOW?
NESS.

ANGIE?
WHY'D YOU LEAVE ME, ANGIE?
I DON'T WANT IT TO GO AWAY, ANGIE. I DON'T WANT THIS TO END. IT'S ALL OVER SO FAST. EVERYTHING...
I KNOW, NESS. I'M SO SORRY. DRIVING THE MACHINE WAS MY DREAM. MY LIFE.
WHEN IT WAS OVER I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I STILL DON'T. WHEN I SAW THE SAME THING HAPPENING TO YOU, I DRANK TILL I FORGOT I EVEN HAD DREAMS.
I WISH I COULD GO BACK, BUT I CAN'T. NONE OF US CAN. BUT I'M HERE NOW.
YOU THINK YOU CAN DO THIS?
LIKE RIDING A BICYCLE. YOU REST.
I'M COMING FOR YOU, JUN.

THERE'S TWO KIDS? WHAT'S GOING ON...
<JUN? WHAT IS THIS? IS THIS A MEMORY?>
JUN!
<JUN, I KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW ME.>
<I KNOW YOU.>
SISTER.

YOU HEARD ME SAY THAT?
<JUN... WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?>
ENKI!
RIGHT...
IT'S TIME TO LEAVE HERE, JUN. UNDERSTAND?
YEAH...
GOODBYE.
THUD

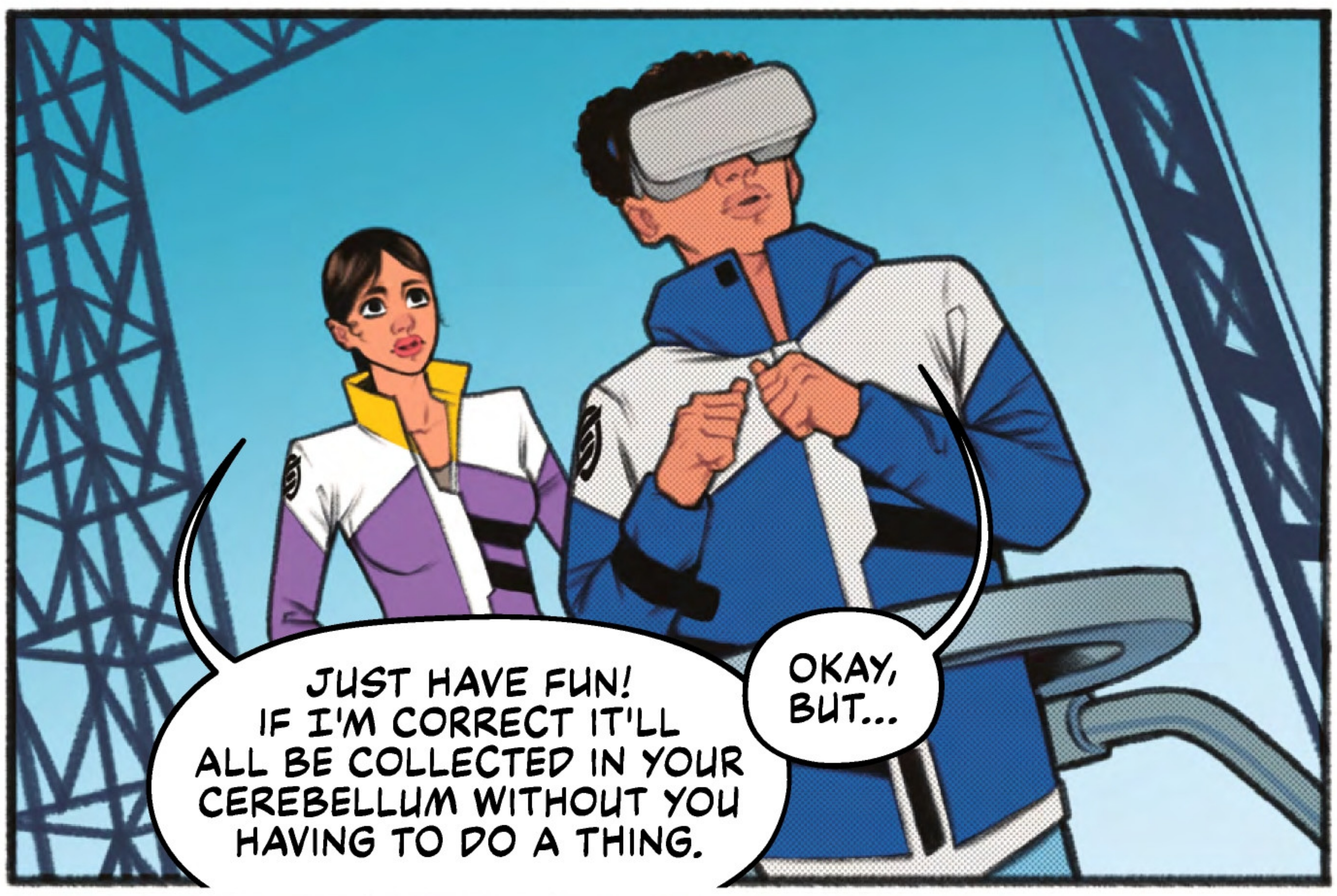
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
RELAX. I GOT HER OUT.
JUST LET THE KID SLEEP FOR NOW.
TIK
TIK
TIK

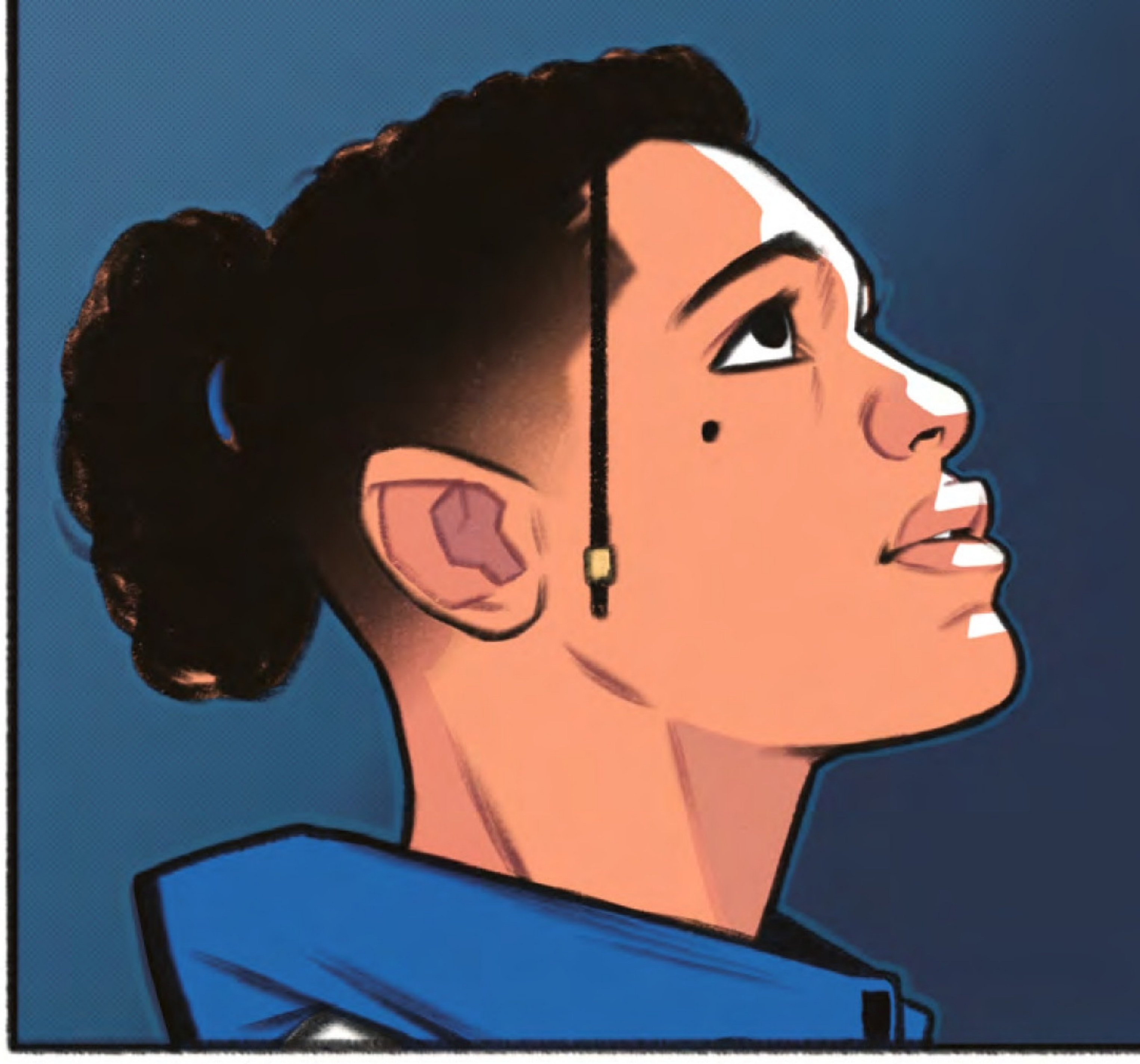
65%
VY
DR
-VX
VX
G*
-VY

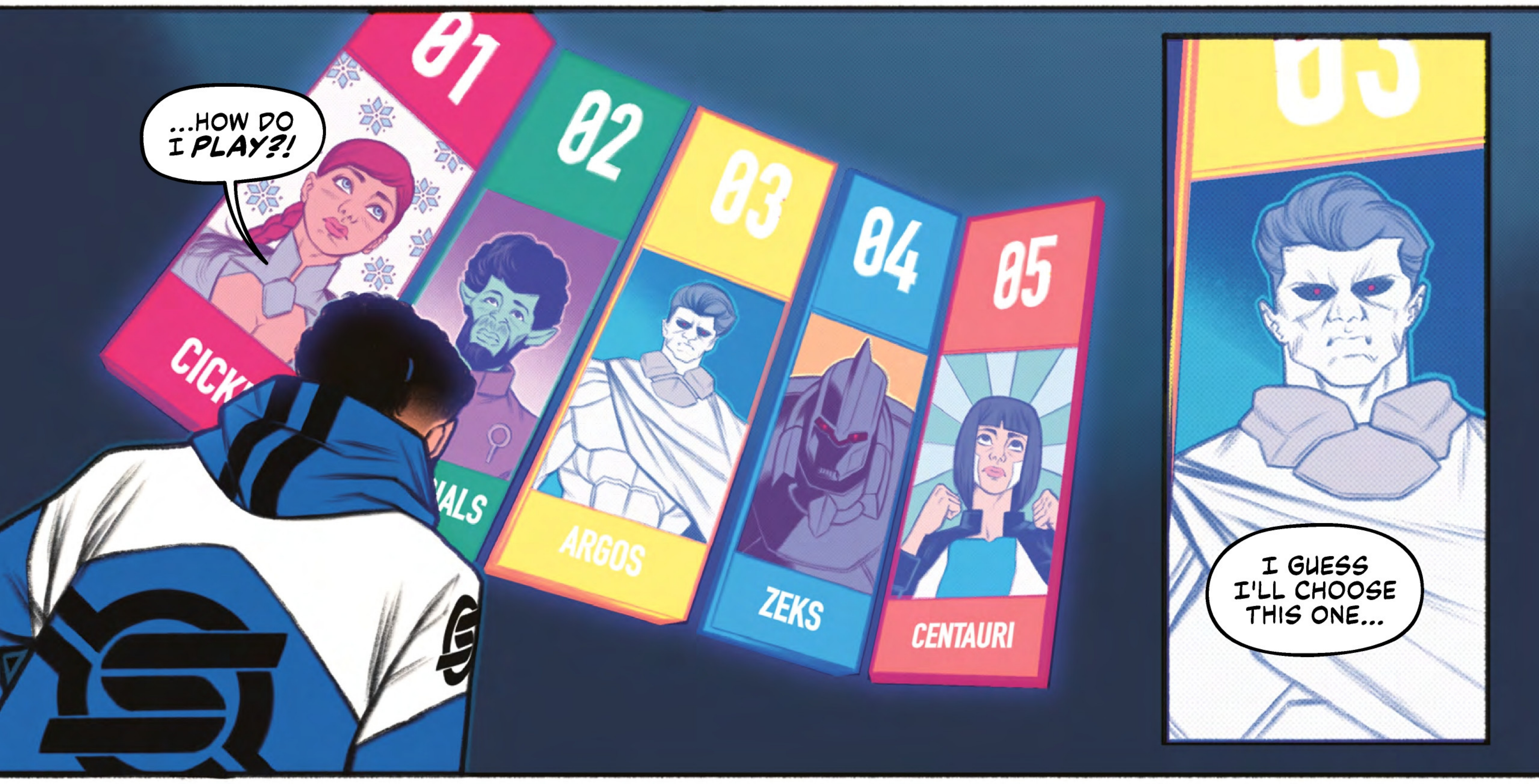
CHAPTER
04
friends

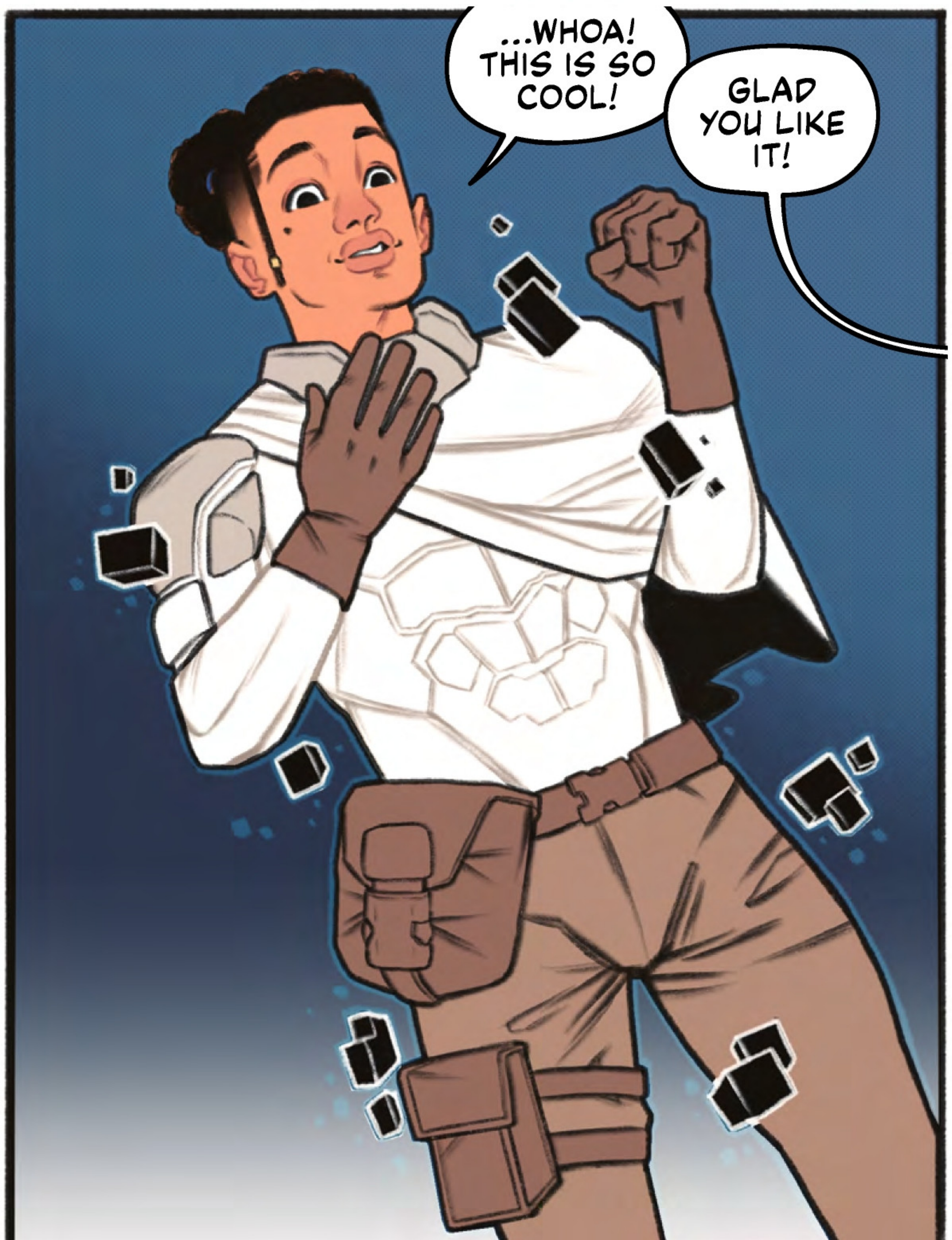
MIT, 2006
DIFFERENCES
AND SO THE QUESTION STILL REMAINS. WHY CAN WE FIND MULTIPLE PERIODS OF WHAT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS ACCELERATED EVOLUTION THROUGHOUT THE FOSSIL RECORD?
WHAT CAUSES LIFE TO SUDDENLY JUMP FORWARD? PERHAPS WE'LL NEVER KNOW, EXACTLY. BUT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE...
...THERE'S SOMETHING FROM UP ABOVE GIVING US A ***HELPFUL NUDGE.***
LYNNE SETI, CORRECT?
OH, YES. THAT'S ME.
EXIT
I QUITE ENJOYED YOUR PRESENTATION. YOU HAD YOUR WHOLE CLASS ENRAPTURED.
THANKS, IT WAS MY FIRST LECTURE. I WAS A LITTLE NERVOUS, BEING THE CRAZY U.F.O. T.A. ARE YOU A PROFESSOR HERE?
NO, I'M A RECRUITER, FOR A VERY ***IMPORTANT*** COMPANY. I WANT TO OFFER YOU A JOB.
I PROMISE WITH US, NO ONE WILL CALL YOU ***CRAZY.***

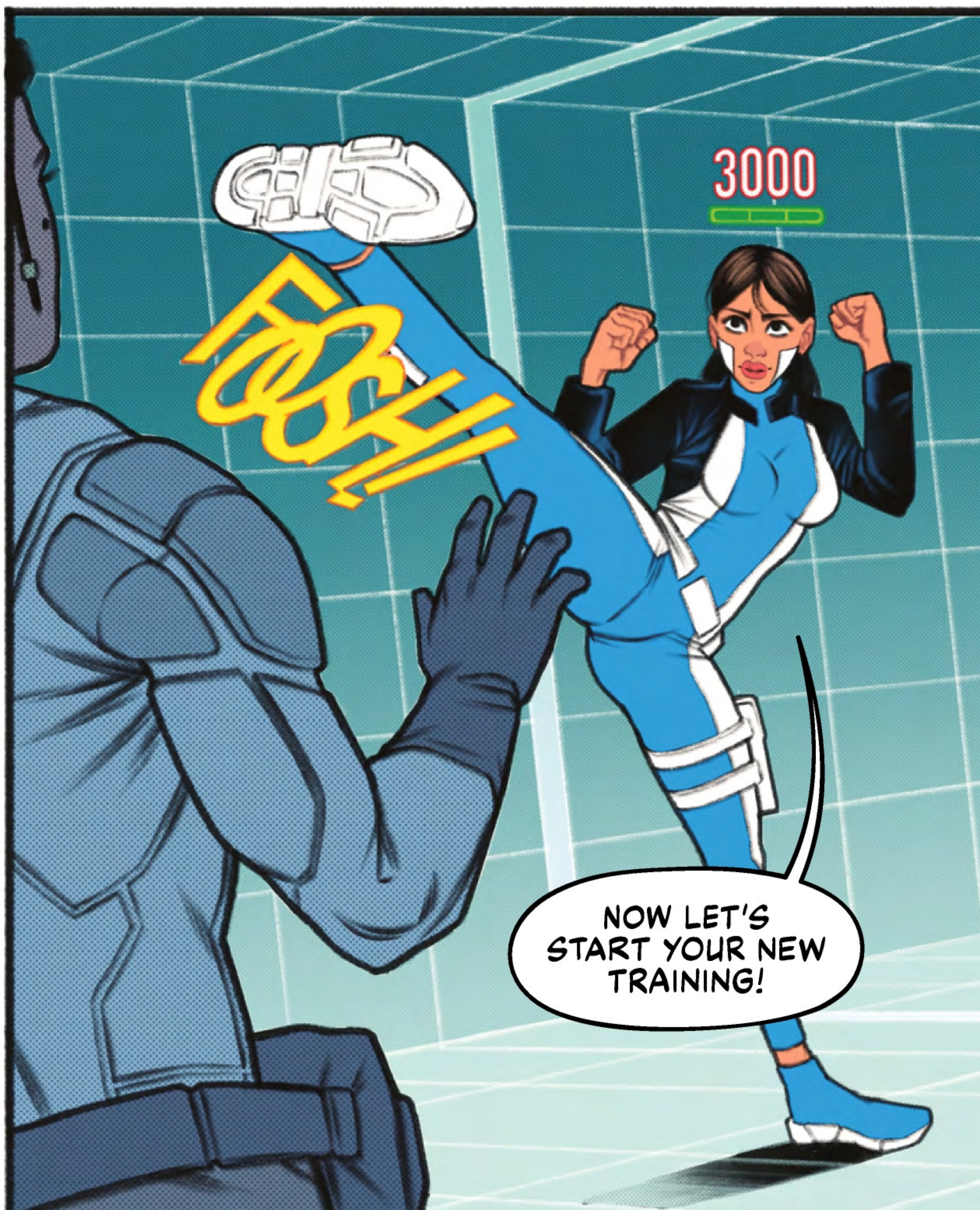
THE ZON-3
ZON
TRY IT
NCE
YOU'RE CRAZY IF YOU THINK THIS WILL HELP WITH MY TRAINING!
THIS WILL BE GOOD FOR YOU, SHILOH. WHEN HAVE YOU EVER HAD SOME HEALTHY COMPETITION, HUH?
I'VE SPENT WAY TOO MUCH TIME HERE SO I HAVE TWO ACCOUNTS. THIS ONE'S MY SMURF. HERE, TAKE THIS.
PRIZE
QUEUE
TRY IT
YOU DON'T THINK I HAVE A PLAN, BUT I DO. SEE, ALL THE DRIVERS REPORT SEEING CONTROLS IN THE CONNECTION FOR THEM TO USE. HOWEVER, NO TWO ACCOUNTS OF THEM ARE THE SAME.
FOR EXAMPLE, VIVIAN'S CONTROLS ARE DESCRIBED AS RETROFUTURISTIC AND I THINK YOUR SISTER REALLY LIKED SENTAI.
THAT'S ALL TO SAY YOUR BRAIN DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO MANIFEST. IT'S FILLING THE CONNECTION WITH WHAT IT CAN. MEMORIES THE PAST DRIVERS LEFT BEHIND. THATS MY THEORY, AT LEAST.


JUST HAVE FUN! IF I'M CORRECT IT'LL ALL BE COLLECTED IN YOUR CEREBELLUM WITHOUT YOU HAVING TO DO A THING.
OKAY, BUT...




...HOW DO I *PLAY?!*
01
CICK
02
ALS
03
ARGOS
04
ZEKS
05
CENTAURI
I GUESS I'LL CHOOSE THIS ONE...


...WHOA! THIS IS SO COOL!
GLAD YOU LIKE IT!


3000
FOOSH!
NOW LET'S START YOUR NEW TRAINING!

KEUNG'S FACILITY
住院区
住院区
WHO DO YOU THINK THE *OTHER* KID WAS? THE *GLOWING CHILD.* ARE THEY PART OF A PAST DRIVER?
NO ONE THAT YOUNG HAS BEEN IN THE CONNECTION OTHER THAN JUN. MAYBE THE RUSSIANS? BUT THERE'S STILL SO LITTLE WE KNOW. *ANYTHING* IS POSSIBLE.
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? I THOUGHT YOUR CONNECTION WAS GONE.
I DID, TOO.
TUMP
SO HOW'D YOU DO IT?!
TELL ME, ANGELINE!
SHE'S FINE, LOWER YOUR GUNS. *ALL OF YOU!*
HELP ME...
I KNOW AS MUCH AS YOU DO. MAYBE THE STRESS ALLOWED ME TO TAP INTO THE LAST REMAINING NEURONS THAT SURVIVED THE PAST DECADE.
WE JUST HAVE TO KEEP IT TOGETHER UNTIL WE GET HOME, NESS. THEN SYNAP CAN RUN SOME TESTS AND FIND SOME ANSWERS. BUT UNTIL THEN, REMEMBER...
...WE *AREN'T* AMONG FRIENDS.
RIGHT.

<KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON OUR ONLOOKERS. WE MUST STAVE OFF RETALIATION FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.>*
<UNTIL MY GRANDDAUGHTER AND THE OLD ONE ARE FAR AWAY FROM THIS PLACE.>
<WHY DO YOU CALL IT THAT?>
*<>TRANSLATED FROM MANDARIN
<THE OLD ONE. GOD. DO YOU WORSHIP THESE PIECES OF JUNK?>
<WHAT IS OUR CREATOR IF ANYTHING BUT...>
...A GOD?
CREATOR?
AH, SO YOU DON'T KNOW EITHER, SIX? IT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE ME THAT ROKE HAS SHIED AWAY FROM THE SPIRITUAL.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU.

"<MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, UNDER A FAR YOUNGER SUN, OUR WORLD WAS BRIMMING WITH LIFE. A SMALL BLUE GEM ADRIFT IN THE COSMIC BACK ALLEYS OF THE MILKY WAY.>
"<AND HERE THAT LIFE GREW, FLOURISHED. WHAT IT WOULD'VE BECOME, ONLY A DIFFERENT UNIVERSE KNOWS.>
"<OUR CORNER OF THE GALAXY WAS UNTOUCHED FOR SOME TIME, UNNOTICED. UNFOUND. UNTIL ONE DAY.>
"<FROM THE CELESTIAL REACHES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.>
FSSSSSSSHHH
"<GOD CAME TO PAY A VISIT.>"
BOOM
EARTH, 250 MILLION YEARS AGO

"<THEY CLEANSED THE LAND.>
"<AND POPULATED IT WITH THEIR CHILDREN.>"
WHAT ARE YOU TRYNA SAY, OLD MAN? THAT WE'RE ALIENS?
NO, SEVEN. *ANGELS.*

SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY, 2006
HOLY SHIT, THIS PLACE IS HUGE! WHO ARE YOU ALL?
A GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS STRIVING FOR THE SAME THING. SMART, PASSIONATE PROBLEM SOLVERS DEDICATED TO UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE THAT TRANSCENDS THIS PLANET. THE TRUTH ABOUT LIFE AND WHERE IT CAME FROM.
PEOPLE LIKE YOU. FRIENDS.
MISS SETI.
I'M ABOUT TO SHOW YOU THE MOST IMPORTANT DISCOVERY OF ALL TIME. WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SEE CANNOT BE UNSEEN. ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR NEW REALITY? *THE REAL REALITY.*
Y-YES.
GOOD.

WELCOME TO *SYNAP TECHNOLOGIES,* MS. SETI.

ARGOS
CENTAURI
BZZZTZZZZ
THE ZON-3
6 HIT COMBO
USE YOUR ABILITY, SHILOH! YOUR CHARACTER CAN CODE WEAPONS.
WHY ARE YOU SO GOOD AT THIS? I CAN'T EVEN GET MY CHARACTER TO MOVE.
I'VE SPENT MORE TIME HERE THAN I'D LIKE TO ADMIT. I WAS BIG INTO E-SPORTS WHEN I WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE. THIS PLACE MAKES ME FEEL YOUNG AGAIN.
WINNER
3000
LET'S FIND YOU AN EASIER OPPONENT. SOMEONE CLOSER TO YOUR SKILL LEVEL.
YOU GOT THIS, SHILOH! HIS RATING IS ABOUT THE SAME AS YOURS!
431
420
THERE... YOU...ARE...

431
FIGHT!
OKAY...I GOT THIS.
DEEP BREATHS.

ALL RIGHT, LET'S DO THIS!
RATATATATA
RATATATATA
SRLRAM

LOST AGAIN.
SHILOH!
I SAW YOU USE YOUR ABILITY, YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF THIS!
TRY IT
I THINK I ENTERED ***THE CONNECTION.***
YOU DID?
SHIT. WE HAVE TO GET BACK.
THE LAB SHOULD RUN A FEW TESTS ON YOU, ANYWAY.
NOW, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

03
THANKS, DR. SETI. FOR TODAY. FOR EVERYTHING.
THE PLEASURE WAS ALL MINE, SHILOH. I THINK WE'VE PLAYED ENOUGH MATCHES FOR YOU TO CALL ME LYNNE. I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.
LYNNE
PLATINUM
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, DIRECTOR?
COME HERE.

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
CLOSER.
ROKE?

KEUNG'S FACILITY
ANGELS? I NEED THREE OF WHATEVER HE'S SMOKING.
IT MIGHT NOT BE AS CRAZY AS YOU THINK.
MY DAD SHOWED ME THIS BEFORE I LEFT.
WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT?
WHAT IF IT'S ALL CONNECTED? THIS UFO, THE GLOWING CHILD, THE MACHINE?
WHAT IF IT'S THEM, NESS? WHAT IF IT'S WHOEVER BUILT THE MACHINE COMING TO GET IT BACK? JUN CALLED IT ENKI.
JESUS CHRIST, ANGIE. *THINK* ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS. THERE COULD BE HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF ALIENS. THOUSANDS! MILLIONS OR BILLIONS OF YEARS OLD. WHY WOULD THEY APPEAR TO A CHILD *AS* A CHILD? WHY WOULD THEY DO ANY OF THIS? WHY NOT JUST TAKE THE ROBOT IF THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT?
MAYBE THEY CAN'T. I'M NOT GOING TO PRETEND I CAN FATHOM HOW AN ANCIENT ALIEN CIVILIZATION THINKS. BUT IT WOULDN'T BE A STRETCH TO SAY...
...MAYBE THEY KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T.

EXIT
ANGIE, WHAT'S GOING ON?
I DON'T KNOW--
BRUUUUM

WHAAAAAAAAAA
ANGIE!
WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE!
AHHH! MY HEAD!
WE HAVE TO MOVE, VANESSA!
IT FEELS LIKE MY BRAIN'S ABOUT TO SPLIT IN TWO!
BRING THE HUMAN CHILD BACK TO ME!

GAHHHH!
院区
NOT THE TIME FOR THIS, NESS!
RATATATA

BAM BAM
SWISH
SWISH
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
FOLLOW US, WE'LL GET YOU OUT.

OUT OF THE WAY! SHE NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION!

80%
VY
DR
-VX
VX
G*
-VY

CHAPTER 05

choices

KEUNG'S FACILITY
连接区
TUM TUM TUM
RATATATATA
警告
连接区

C'MON, VANESSA...
...WAKE UP ALREADY!
ANGIE...IS THAT YOU?

YOU'RE THE CHILD ANGIE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
MAYBE YOU ARE AN ALIEN.
WAIT!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HISSSS
WHAT? IS MY CONNECTION TOO WEAK FOR YOU?

SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY
TRY AND CLOSE THE ROBOT'S FIST, SHILOH.
I'M TRYING.
08
STAND CLEAR FROM THIS AREA
WHOA, THERE'S CONTROLS HERE NOW.
I CAN DO THIS.
JUST LIKE PLAYING A GAME AT THE ARCADE.
RAHHHHHHHH!
CRAKKK

CRRKKK
SHILOH
WHAT THE?
WHERE'D THE CONTROLS GO?
BLIP
FSSS
WHAT'S WRONG, SHILOH? YOU WERE SO CLOSE!
I-I DON'T KNOW. JUST GOT IN MY HEAD...
EIGHT MAY NEVER BE READY. START ALLOCATING AGENTS FOR A CONNECTION TEST OF THE COUNTRY.
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?!

DRIVER 8
STUPID DAD... STUPID LY-DOCTOR SETI...
PERMI
OLD STUFF
I CAN DO THIS... I CAN DO THIS...
...DAMMIT!
WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?
WHY WAS I EVEN BORN?!
SOB
SOB

I'M BACK IN THE CONNECTION?
LET ME GO!
IS THAT NESS? I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE SHE AND ANGIE BROKE UP...
HEY, LET HER GO--

LET. ME. GO!
GRYAAAH
<STOP STRUGGLING, PRIMATE. YOUR INTERFERENCE THREATENS EVERYTHING!>
WHAT... ARE YOU?
<THERE'S NO TIME TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND.>
GLAAAARG

GOOD, YOU'RE AWAKE.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
南区
YOUR HEAD MUST BE CLOUDED STILL. CAN YOU STAND?
TUMP
I'VE BEEN TRACKING JUN THROUGH THE AXON. SHIT, THAT GIRL HAS POTENTIAL.
HER CONNECTION IS LIKE A *MASSIVE MAGNET.*

THIS WAY.
下区域
IT'S SIX.
TUM TUM

茶点区
SO WHAT'S THE PLAN? WE'VE GOT A CHILD AND TWO GIANT ROBOT LEGS TO GET PAST A CHINESE BATTALION OUTSIDE.
THEY WANT TO BARGAIN.
SAFE PASSAGE OF THE OLD ONE FOR MY GRANDDAUGHTER.
WHY WOULD THEY WANT TO MAKE THAT TRADE? SHE'S JUST A LITTLE GIRL.
SHE IS MORE THAN JUST A CHILD, SIX. THE OLD ONE IS THE PAST.
NINE IS THE FUTURE.

NESS, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
茶
<YOU WILL NO LONGER GET IN MY WAY!>
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU, VANESSA!
WHAK
FUCK!
GRAB
YOUR EYES...
...THEY'RE GLOWING!

DUFF
WHAM
<DO NOT INTERFERE.>
<GIVE ME THE GIRL.>
<WE ARE THE ONLY ONES PROTECTING YOU.>
<DON'T LISTEN TO THEM! THAT IS THE LANGUAGE OF DEMONS!>*
*<>TRANSLATED FROM MANDARIN
<LOOK AWAY!>
<YOU PRIMATES WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.>
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.

LET ME GO!
YOU DIED A LONG TIME AGO, YOU'RE NOT REAL!
HUH?
WHAT'RE YOU DOING TO THE CONNECTION?
IS THIS ANOTHER MEMORY?
SYNAP UNDERGROUND FACILITY, 1963
VIVIAN...

DON'T HOLD BACK. TELL ME. IT'S GONE, ISN'T IT?
V.R.
IT WILL BE SOON. WE CAN SEE YOUR CONNECTION IS RAPIDLY DETERIORATING.
WHAT NOW? IS AMERICA JUST GOING TO *THROW* ME AWAY?
ARE YOU?
VIVIAN.
I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU.
AND THIS COUNTRY STILL NEEDS BOTH OF US.
V.R.
AND SO DOES OUR SON.

YOU WERE PREGNANT? BUT IF YOU HAD A KID, WHY DID YOU...
...KILL YOURSELF?
WHY ARE YOU SHOWING ME ALL OF THIS?! *VIVIAN!*
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?
YOUR CHILD... WERE THEY A DRIVER, TOO?
DID YOU FEEL THAT? I THINK SOMEONE ENTERED THE CONNECTION.

ANGIE?!
VANESSA!
LET HER GO!
I-I CAN FEEL THE CONNECTION AGAIN, ANGIE. ENKI GAVE IT BACK TO ME. IT'S SO MUCH BIGGER THAN WE COULD'VE IMAGINED! WE'RE SO SMALL, ANGIE.

YOU HAVE TO SNAP OUT OF IT, NESS. YOU'RE BEING CONTROLLED. YOUR CONNECTION *ISN'T* GONE!
LOOK AT ME. I GOT US IN HERE. MAYBE OUR AXON CONNECTIONS DON'T DISAPPEAR BUT CHANGE!
DO YOU *REALLY* THINK SO?
YES. EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY. NOW LET'S GET YOU FREE.
<YOU ARE GOING NOWHERE!>
ANGIE!
GREAT, NOW I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU?!

WHOA... I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.
<WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!>
<I CANNOT MOVE!>
FEELS LIKE I COULD DO ANYTHING.
WHAT IF I DID...
...THIS?
<GRAAAAHHH!>
I'M TAKING YOU HOME.

VANESSA!
THANKS... ANGIE.
KEUNG, YOU WERE RIGHT, THEY'RE BACK. THE ALIENS, ANGELS, WHATEVER THE HELL YOU WANNA CALL 'EM! WE GOTTA GO!
KEUNG, WHAT DID YOU DO?
<WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.>
THAT WAS NOT OUR CREATOR, SIX. THAT WAS A DEVIL.
茶点区
ONLY THE *OLD ONE* CAN *SAVE US NOW.*

GET OFF OF ME!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT WITH ME, BUT YOU BETTER START TALKING! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME?!

WHO ARE YOU?
<I'M HERE TO GIVE YOU WHAT YOU DESIRE, CHILD. POWER. CONTROL. RESPECT.>
HOW ABOUT ANSWERS?
<ALL THE KNOWLEDGE IN THE UNIVERSE.>
DON'T!
NOW YOU WANT TO TALK?
WELL, IT'S TOO LATE.

WE WILL SECURE THE MACHINE WHEN THEY CROSS THE PACIFIC.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY GOT TWO LIMBS. ***HOLY SHIT.*** WE MIGHT ACTUALLY FINISH THIS THING.
IT WAS COSTLY. GIVING UP NINE. WE WILL NEED HER. IF WE SURVIVE THIS.
THE HEAD, AN ARM, TWO LEGS...THAT JUST LEAVES ANOTHER ARM AND THE TORSO.
DO YOU THINK THE REST OF IT IS WITH THE RUSSIANS?
WE WILL FIND OUT.
BUT WILL WE HAVE A DRIVER?
KEEP THIS AREA CLEAR
ROKE!
WHAT IS GOING ON?
KEEP THIS AREA CLEAR

THE END?

80%
VY
DR
-VX
G*
-VY

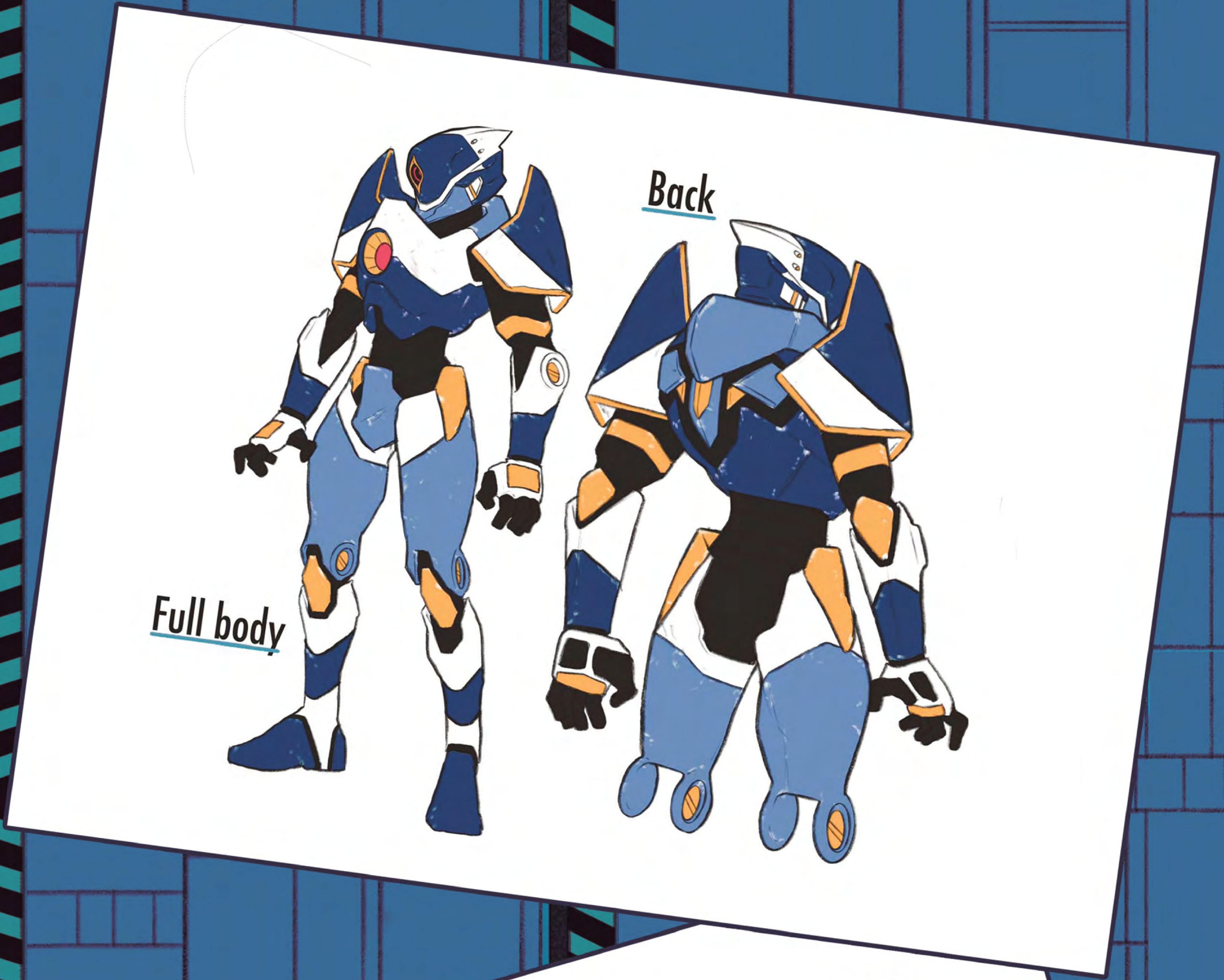
VARIANT
Covers

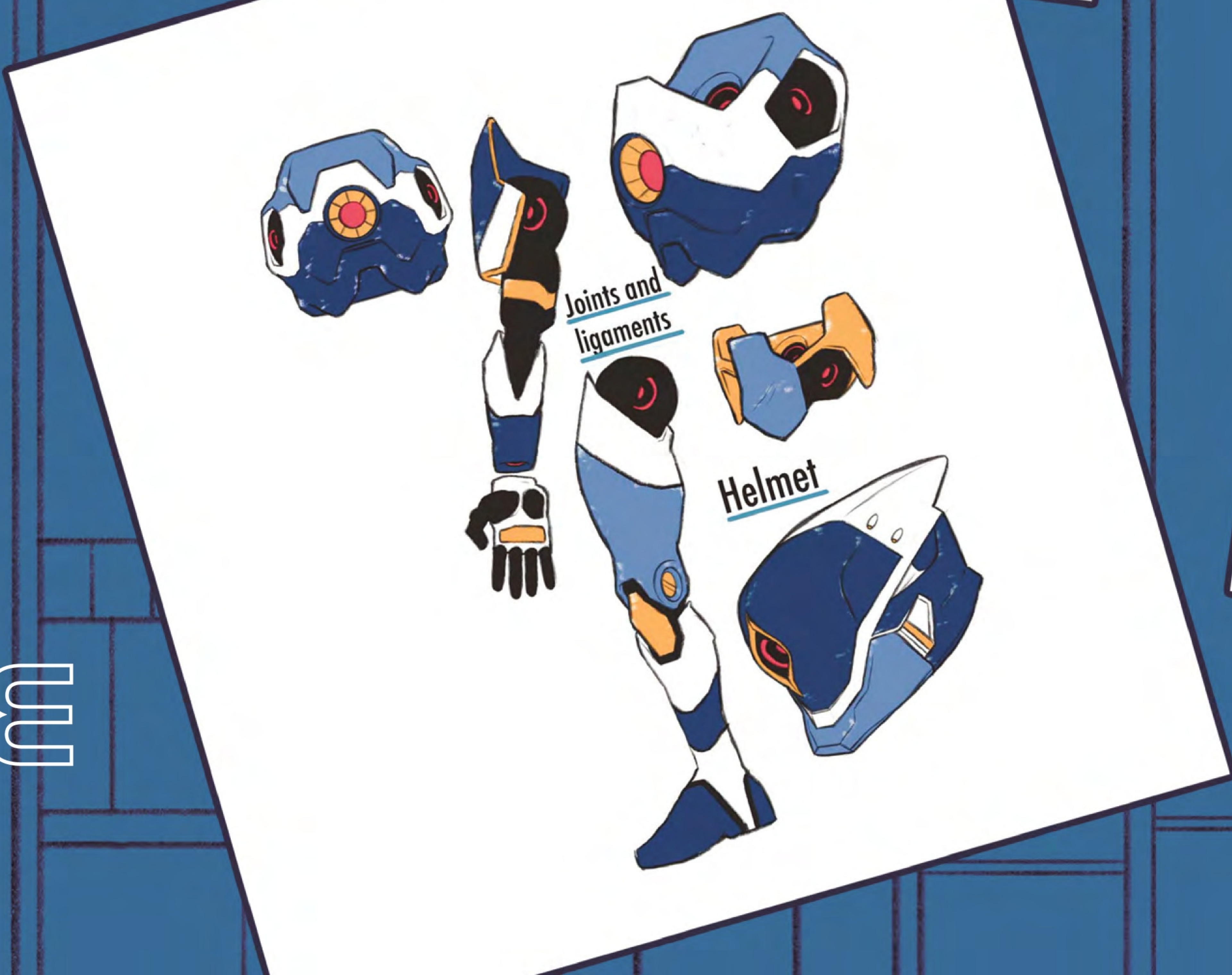
Cover B
STEPHEN BYRNE

Unused Cover
ELEONORA CARLIN

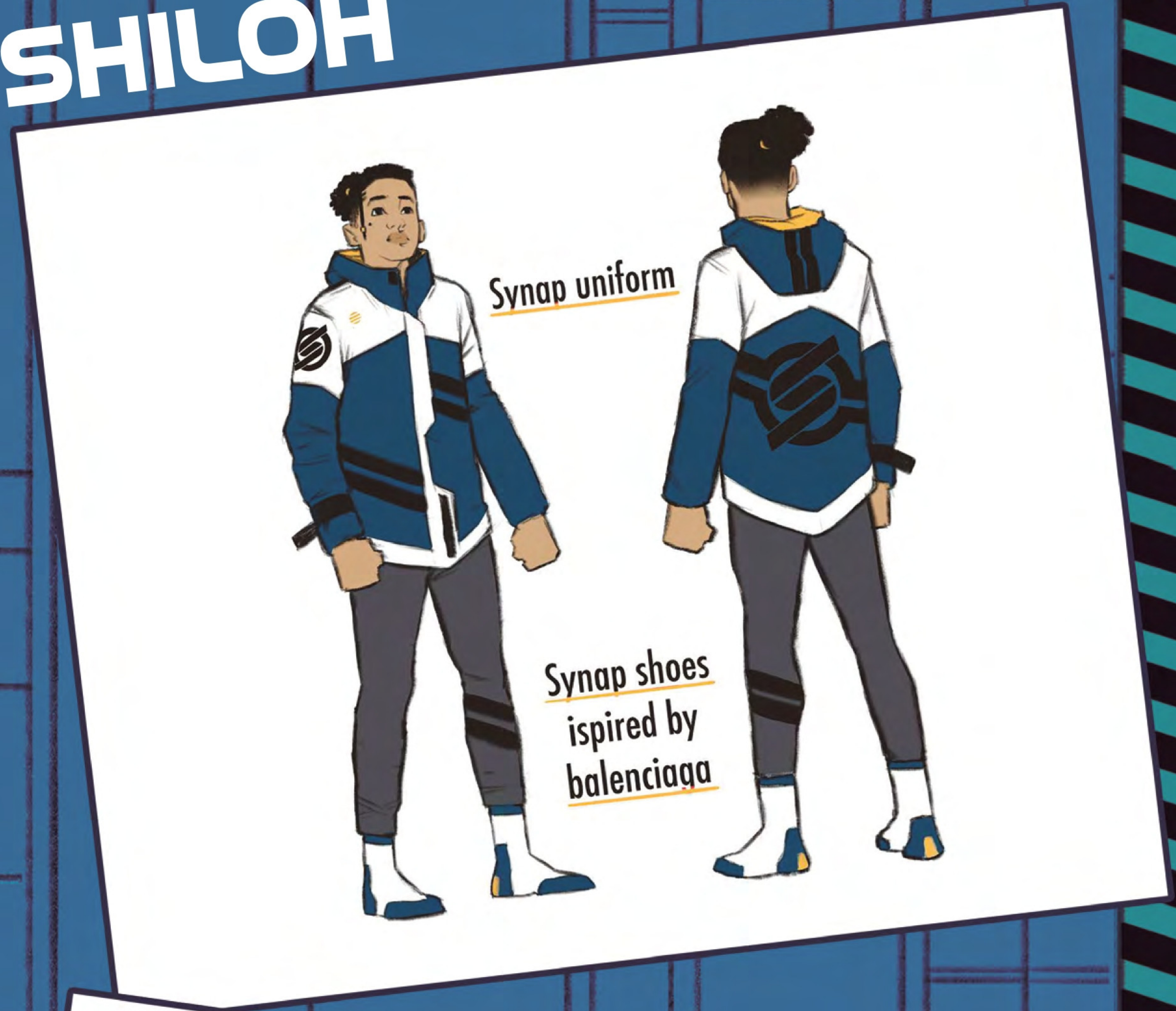
CHARACTER DESIGNS

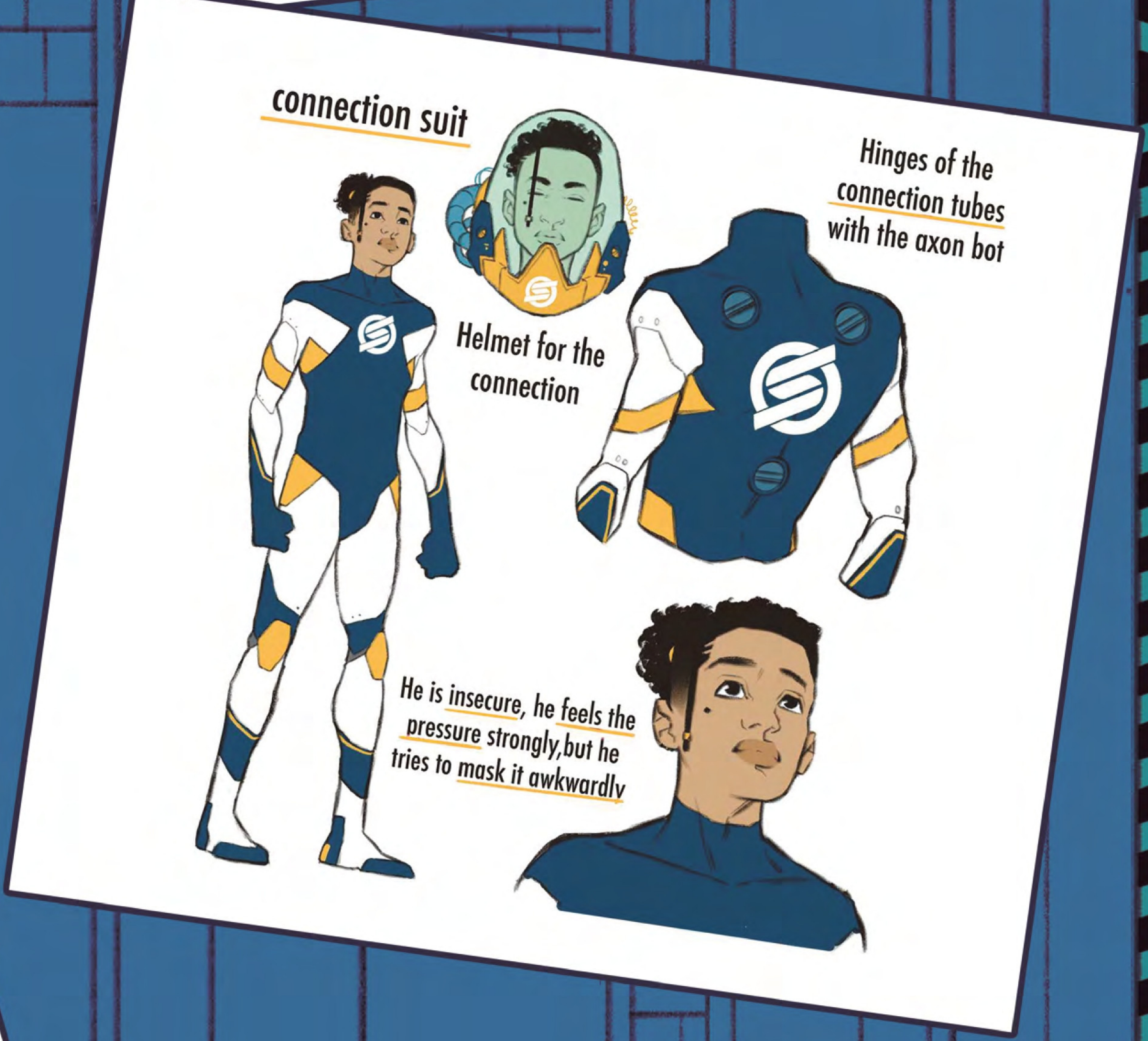
THE BOT
E-LINE


Back
Full body

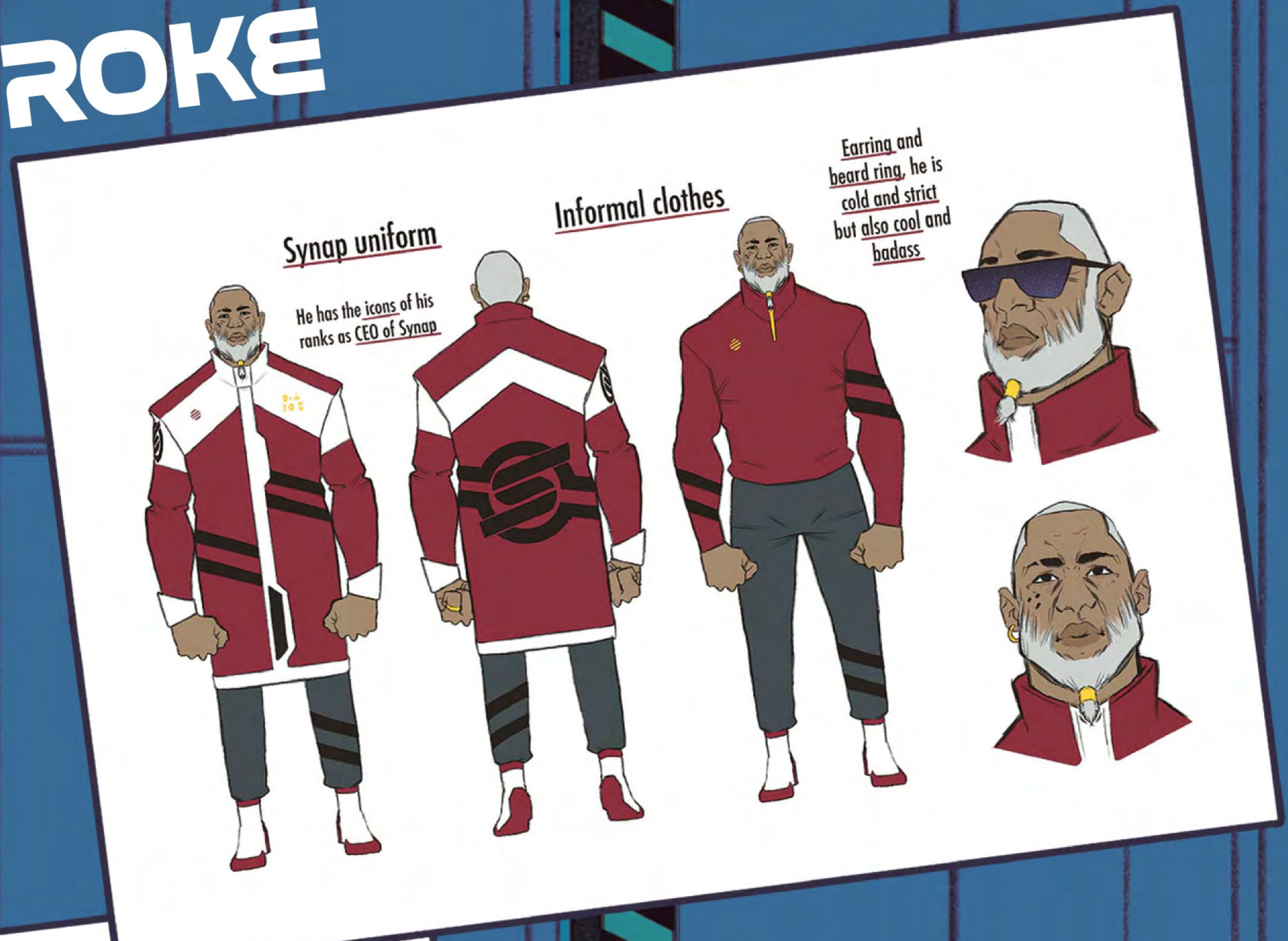

Joints and ligaments
Helmet

SHILOH

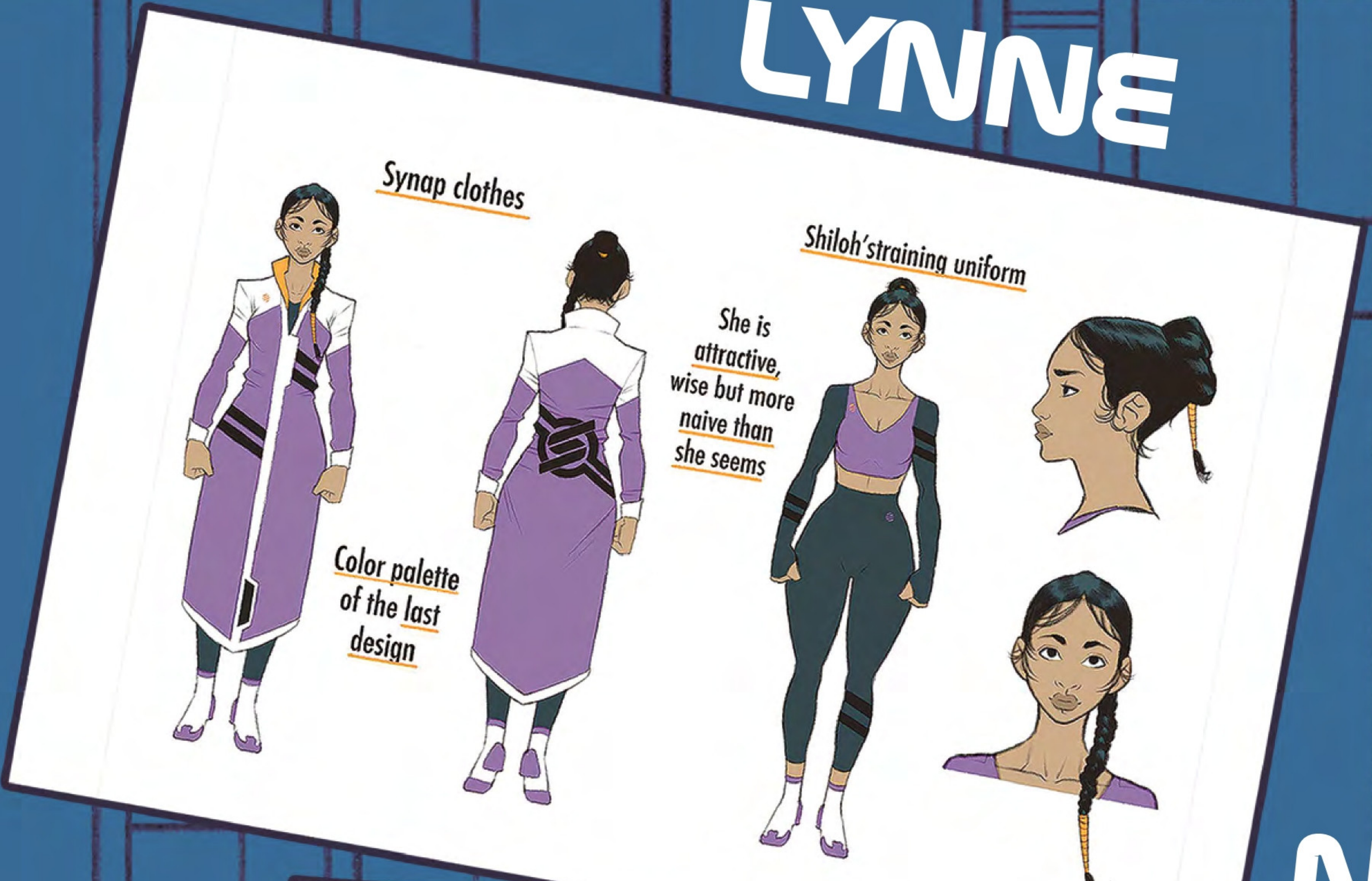

Synap uniform
Synap shoes ispired by balenciaga


connection suit
Helmet for the connection
Hinges of the connection tubes with the axon bot
He is insecure, he feels the pressure strongly, but he tries to mask it awkwardly

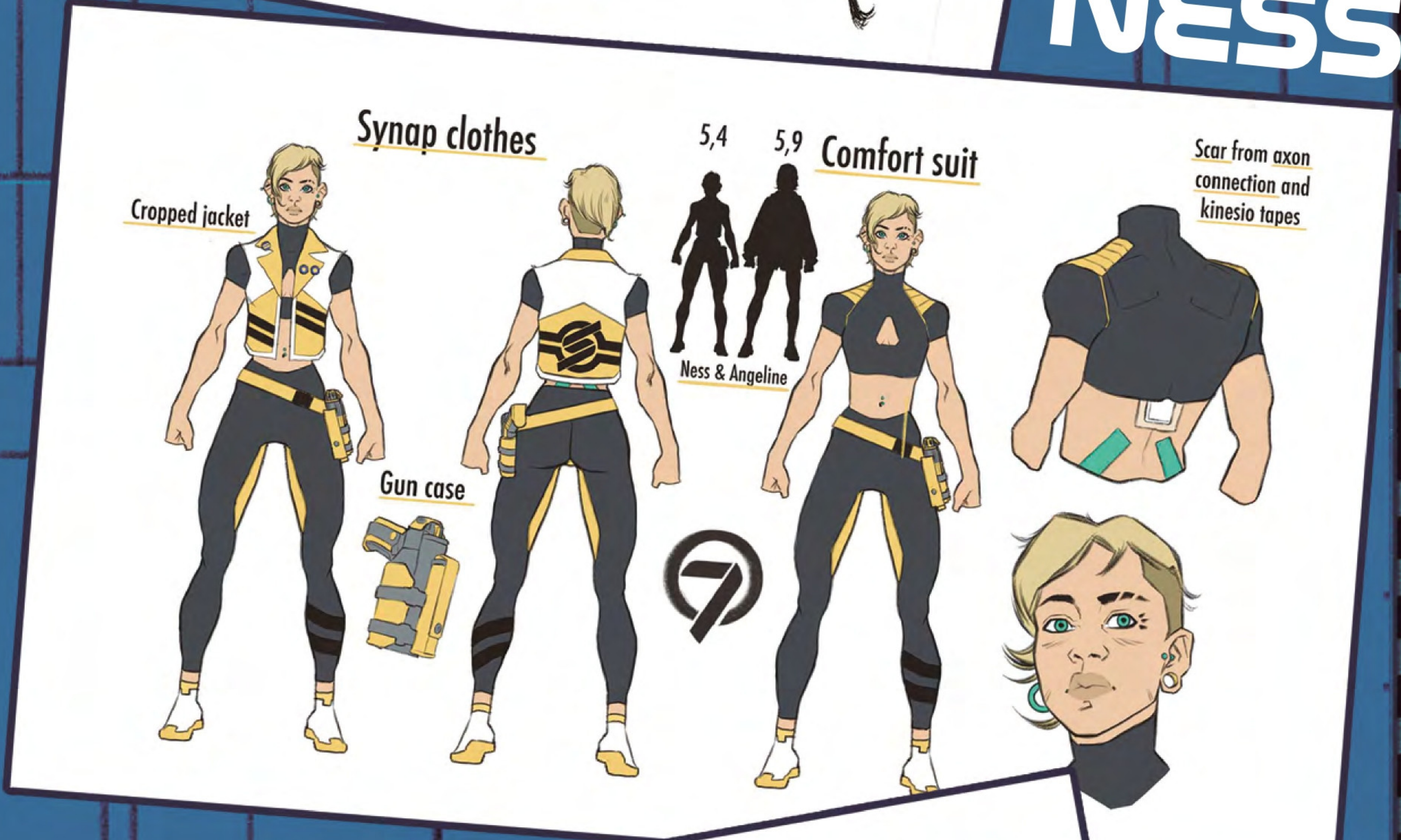
ROKE


Synap uniform
He has the icons of his ranks as CEO of Synap
Informal clothes
Earring and beard ring, he is cold and strict but also cool and badass

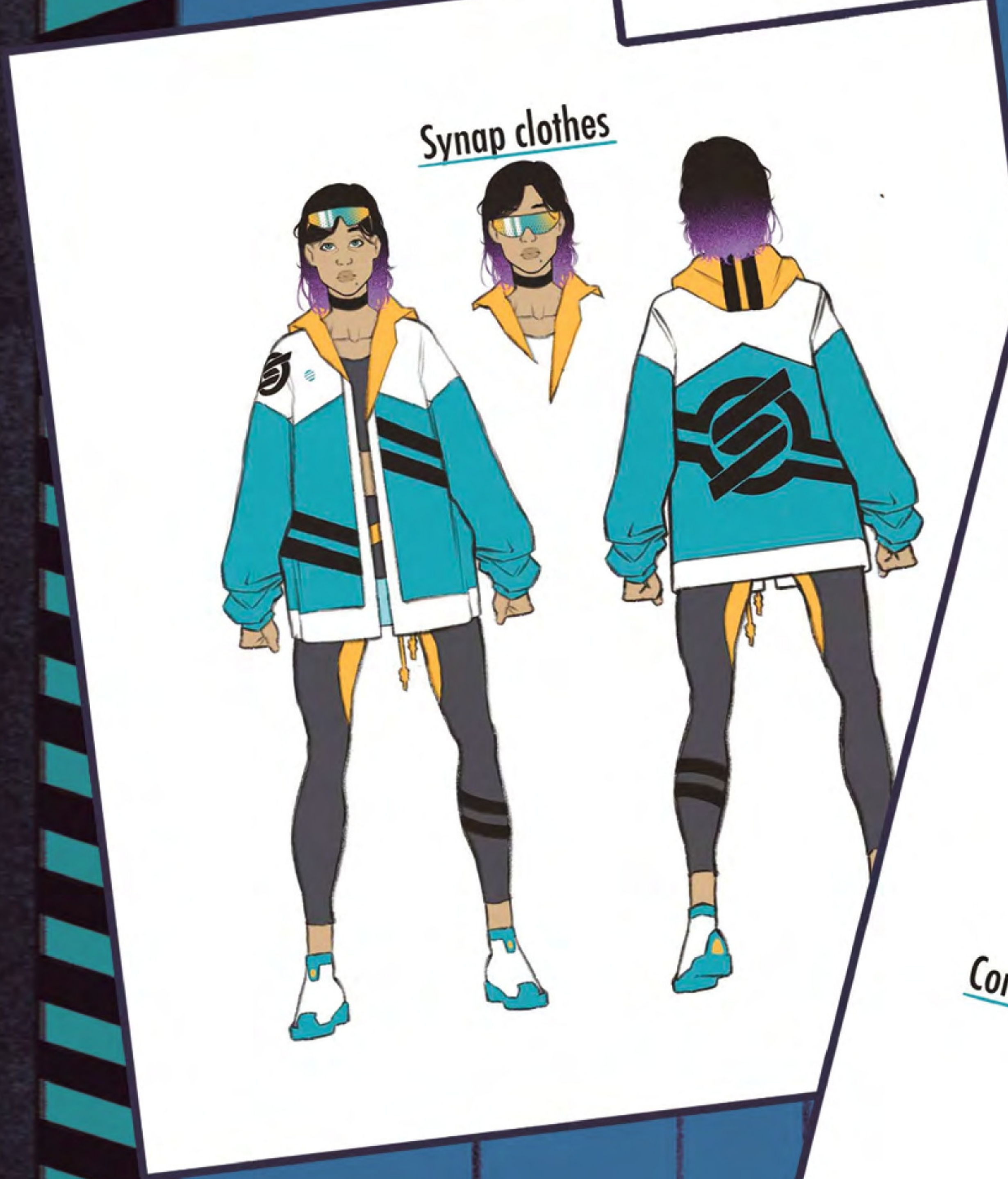
LYNNE

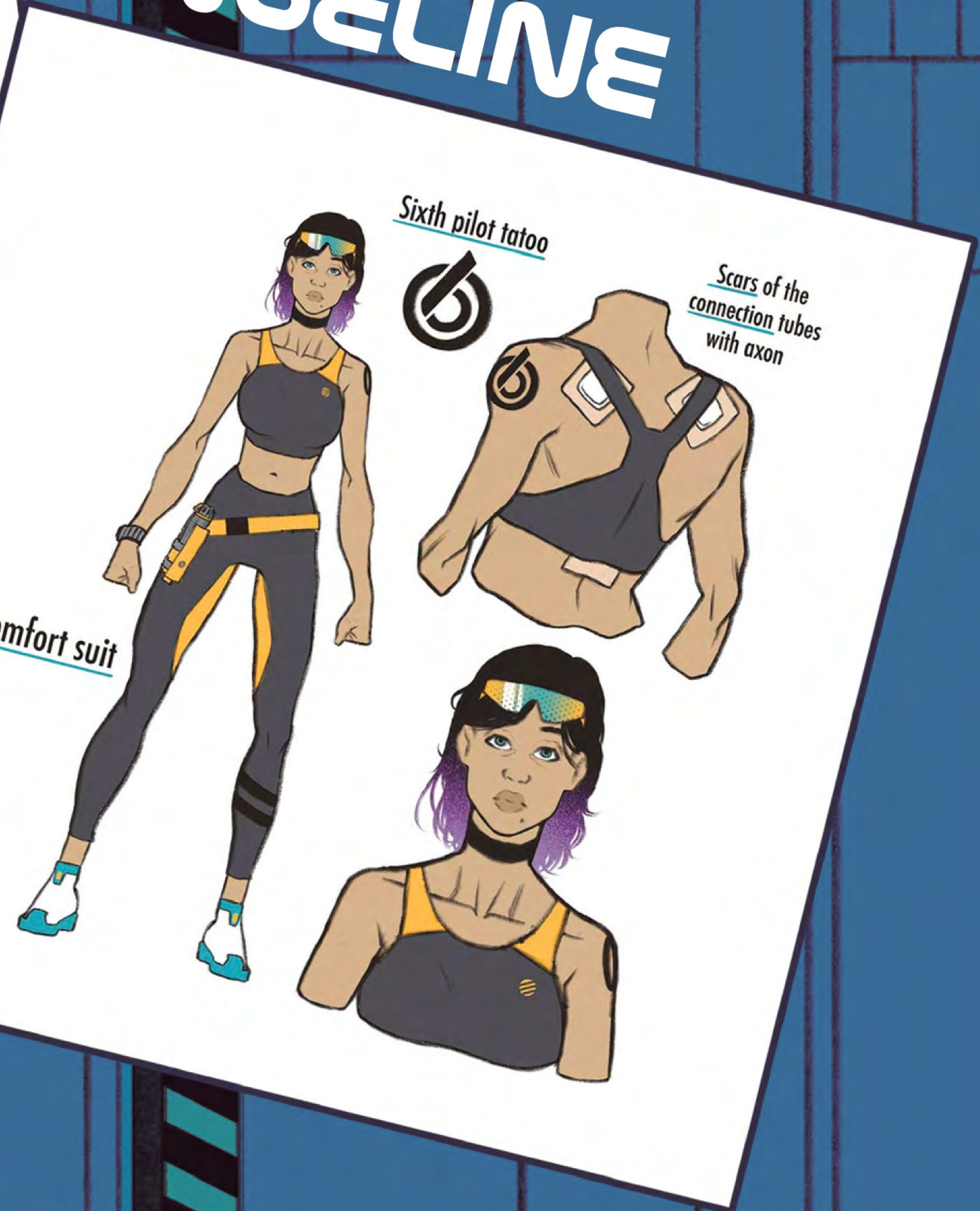

Synap clothes
Color palette of the last design
Shiloh'straining uniform
She is attractive, wise but more naive than she seems

NESS

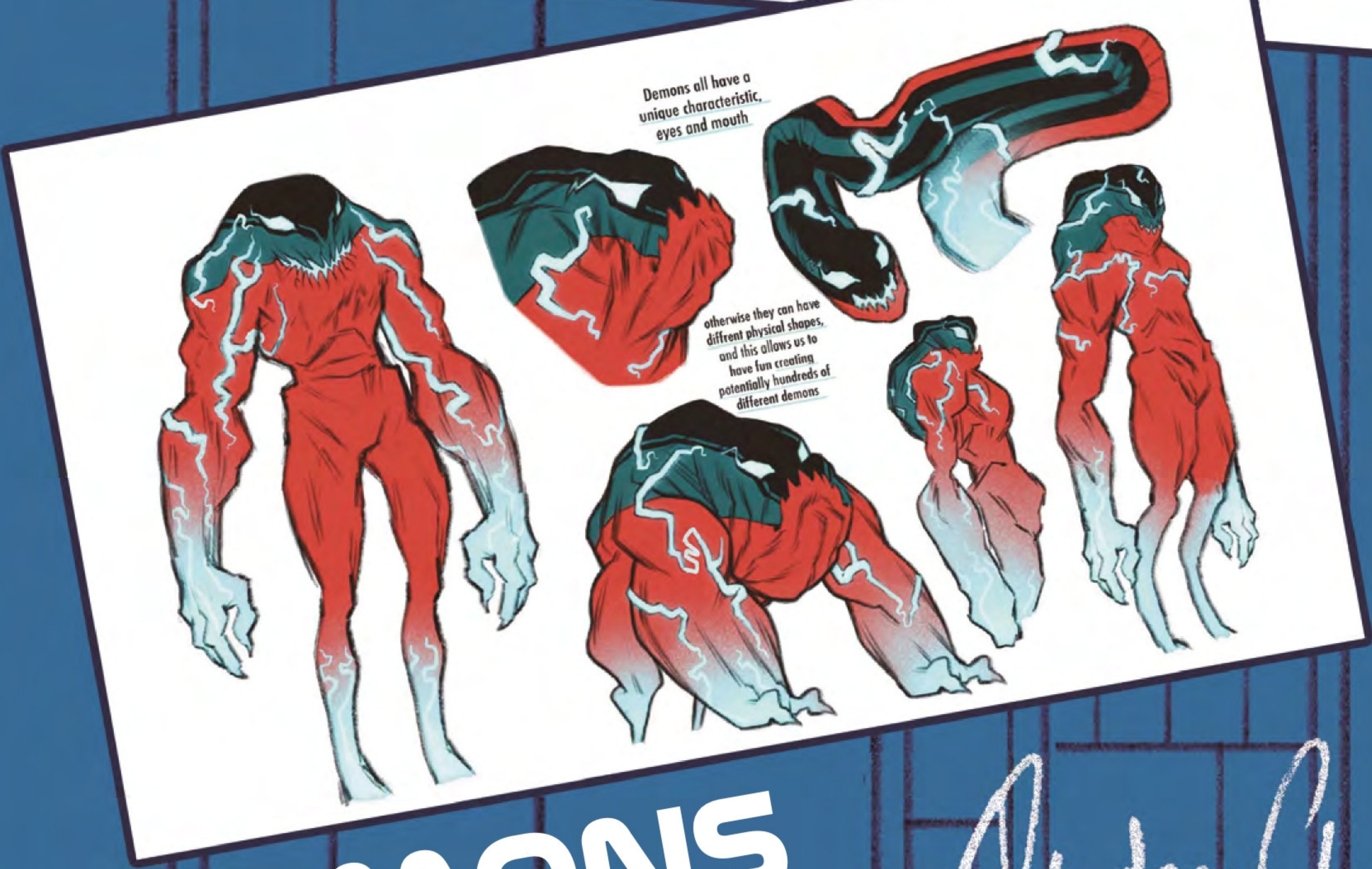

Synap clothes
Cropped jacket
Gun case
5,4
5,9
Comfort suit
Ness & Angeline
Scar from axon connection and kinesio tapes

ANGELINE


Synap clothes


Sixth pilot tatoo
Scars of the connection tubes with axon
Comfort suit

DEMONS


Demons all have a unique characteristic, eyes and mouth
otherwise they can have diffrent physical shapes, and this allows us to have fun creating potentially hundreds of different demons

SYNAP™

In the year 2030, a family-run private defense company, Synap, secretly puts together the pieces of a mysterious giant robot while training psychically gifted individuals to one day control it. However, with the startling increase in UFO sightings, the family finds their time is running out to assemble the ancient machine.

Collects issues #1 to 5.

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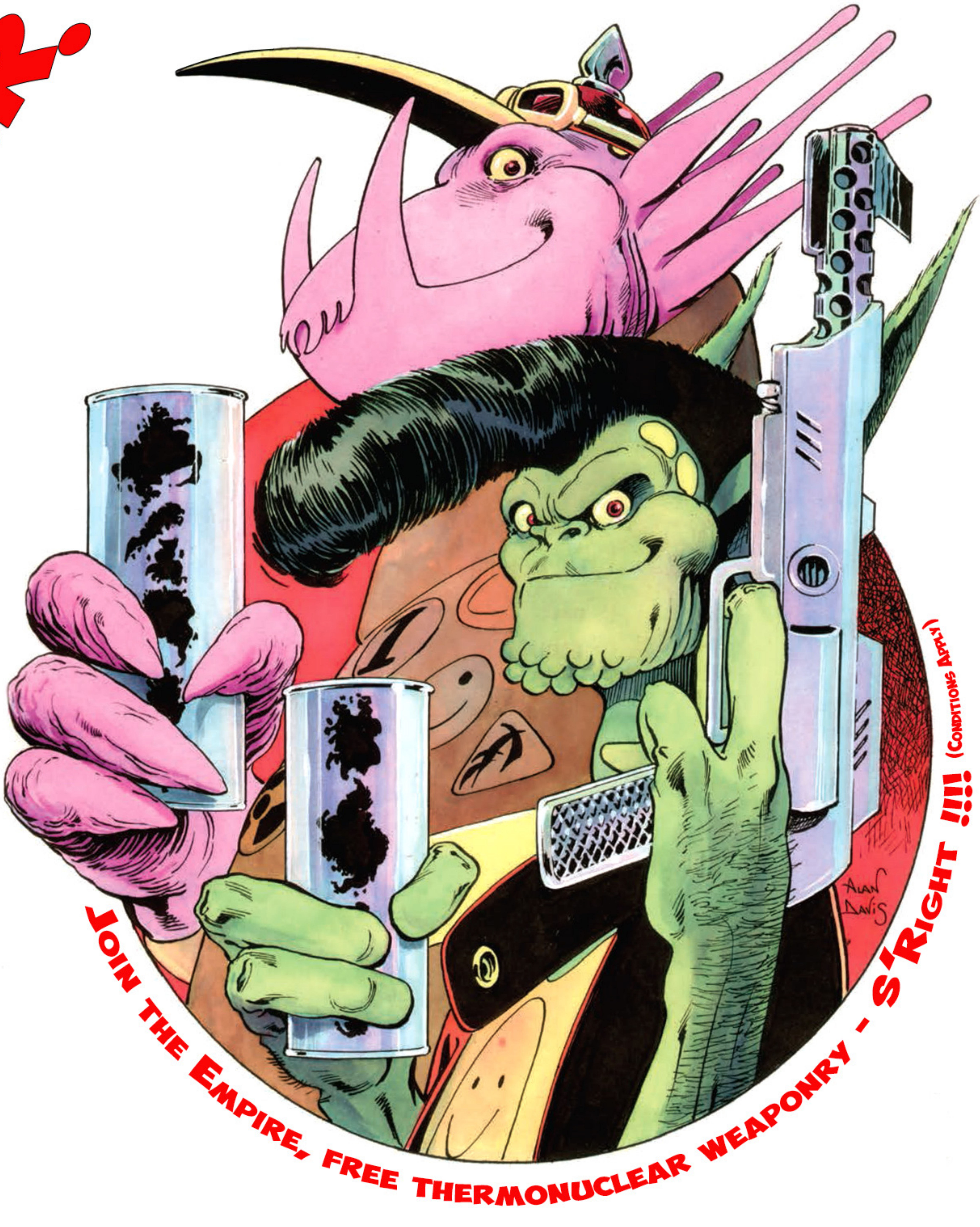
D.R. & QUINCH


ALAN DAVIS
JOIN THE EMPIRE, FREE THERMONUCLEAR WEAPONRY - S'RIGHT !!!! (CONDITIONS APPLY)

K6 NW